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OTHER WORLDS SCIENCE STORIES

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EDITORIAL

WITH this issue, OTHER WORLDS makes what it believes to be a conclusive point—and that point is one that should have been made long ago except for what amounts to a very mysterious and apparently involuntary censorship. It is the point that flying saucers, as they have erroneously been called, actually do exist. In short, this issue of OTHER WORLDS *proves* that they are real, but it does not solve the mystery of what they actually are.

Behind the scenes of Kenneth Arnold's sensational factual array of evidence in this issue lies a story that is as incredible as though it actually *had* come from other worlds. W'll try to tell it here in as factual a manner as Mr. Arnold, the famed aviator who first sighted and reported the mystery craft whose presence flamed into the headlines for two weeks, and made good newspaper and magazine (and book) material for the years since 1947.

The report you will read in this issue was written as a reply to the infantile "solution" of the flying saucer mystery in LOOK magazine by a certain Liddel (who, to pun very badly, knew "liddel" about the subject or more likely saw, as many others have, the publicity value of linking his manuscript with the BIG story). The editor (that's me) of OTHER WORLDS, thinks this kind of jacking up of your own story with a borrowed halo is the most

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stinking trick any writer can use. If Liddel's balloons couldn't carry their own weight, he should have thrown his manuscript in the waste-basket, where, very frankly, it belonged.

What actually happened is that Kenneth Arnold wrote look (we're using the small letters this time to signify how much good they did themselves with the Liddel plate of hash) and offered to present ten instances that *couldn't* be explained by the "skyhook" balloon. You may remember that Liddel said *all* saucer sightings could be explained by the balloons — an asinine claim if we ever heard one! Look suggested a rebuttal article. Then, after they received it, they dropped into a bottomless abyss for six weeks and finally returned the manuscript with the following masterpiece of a rejection note: "We believe another saucer article at this time would be inadvisable, since we have already covered the subject."

The reader of LOOK may remember the letters with loud snorts in them that were published after the Liddel article appeared—and there must have been many more unpublished. It would have seemed that after publishing the ridiculous side of the question, and incurring criticism from their readers, they would have published, in fairness, the common-sense, *factual* side of the story.

Arnold, rather peeved, and who wouldn't be, sent the article to *True*. The same song and dance ensued,

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Cover
H. W. McCauley

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except that Arnold had to telegraph, finally, to find out what wastebasket they had filed the article in.

Now we get down to pore lil OTHER WORLDS. Well, it is interested in flying disks, its readers are interested in them, and being a fiction magazine, it normally publishes only fiction—but in this case, we present FACT, right on the dotted line! We defy any right-thinking (any *thinking*) (even any *unthinking*) person to say "There ain't no sech animal" after he reads THE *REAL* FLYING SAUCER in this issue.

We think that Kenneth Arnold (and all his compatriots who have SEEN what they have seen) got a dirty deal all around, from practically everybody. So, in our little way, we are trying to overcome the smell that hangs around Ken's mailbox, and around the rejection slips from BIG magazines. The skyhook balloons are big, too, but they are full of gas!

While we are on the subject of official gas, let's delve a bit into the weather. This next type of gas we will discuss is called "meteorological gas." It comes from meteorologists. It comes in vast clouds, like water-vapor. But they are only vapor, no water in them. Or rather, they are vaporings.

We can begin the discussion by taking the Russians. Everybody takes them these days. But this time they are giving out with a news release via their propaganda bureau, that the naughty ole USA is ruining the world's weather with its atom bomb experiments. This little complaint was published in the public prints followed by the following gaseous gem: "Meteorologists have long since proven that the atom bomb does not affect the weather."

The FACT is, the atom bomb *does* affect the weather, the proof of that is unassailable, and can be gotten by taking weather records of *any* meteorological bureau and comparing them with the dates of atomic explosions.

Here's what happens: Atom bomb goes off, temperature everywhere drops to unusual low (approximately a 40 degree drop in a 24-hour period), tremendous rainstorms ensue (such as the 12-inch rain reported in the Southwest after one Kwajalein test) and in the case of Kansas, you know what happened there. Yup, the atomic tests coincide there, too. Also comes an unusual number of earthquake shocks. One mountain blew its top and killed 4,000. Queer coincidence, but an atomic explosion had just rocked the planet.

Everybody in America should remember July 4, 1951. Sure got cold for July, didn't it? And brother, did it rain! The records of unusual weather tread right on the heels of atomic tests, in EVERY instance. (If you want the full story, read the August 1951 issue of FATE magazine.)

Your editor is particularly peeved

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at the meteorologist who proved the atom bomb does not affect the weather. He is peeved at the idiot who put that Russian beef on the wire, and perioded it with the undocumented statement. No names, no data, nothing. Lousy reporting; even the lice have lice! Your editor lost 400 bushels of oats to the atomic bomb weather. He has suffered all summer with the pain that damp weather causes (it has rained 65 out of 92 days in Wisconsin, which nobody could claim was *usual*), and worse, many of these rains have clicked his Geiger-counter into the stuttering heebie-jeebies. Even the snow last winter was radioactive all over the country. And here we come to the next balloonful of gas handed out by the meteorologists!

They said: "Although the snow was radioactive, the amount of radioactivity was too small to be harmful to those exposed to it." Now what kind of hog-wash is that? Not less recently, there was an enormous fuss over the discovery that x-ray machines in shoe shops all over the country were dangerous due to poor shielding—and warnings were given not to let your children buy too many shoes via the visual-fit by x-ray method. They said the same thing about those machines—the rays were not harmful unless exposure was continued a long time. Store owners especially were in danger (and the word was *dire* danger). The same goes for the snow and rain—if it is *continually* radioactive, it can become a *dire* danger.

This is a fact: during a recent rain which was radioactive, your editor observed very carefully. Within ten minutes of the fall (which was one of enormous proportion, by the way) his legs (very sensitive due to his hypersensitive condition remaining from a spinal cord injury) began to burn painfully. Within three hours the sensation subsided. During a rain several weeks later, under identical conditions, the same phenomena resulted. Both rains were coupled with atomic tests!

Personally, your editor has a beef coming. Okay, if atom bombs are necessary to preserve our way of life, let 'er go. But dammit, don't lie to me about it! The atom bomb *does* affect the weather. This one time the Russians are right! And we hope Uncle Joe's oats and legs are in the same shape ours are.

We hope you like the changes that are rapidly being made in OTHER WORLDS, beginning with the last issue. We've got a lot more up our sleeves, and now that we're on our feet again, at least enough recovered from our accident to rant and rave about how the government declared atomic war on our oats, and gave us the atomic hotfoot, you'll see things begin to pop in good old OW. One thing we know, it takes health as well as brains to put out a top science fiction magazine—and now we have both! You question the latter? Hah! Read the *stories* and see! *Rap.*

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THESE ARE MY CHILDREN

By Rog Phillips

Who was Mr. Archer? Was his real name Fate? But no! Even a murderer got another chance as Time rolled back — then rolled on again . . .

PETER Hart breathed a sigh of relief as he spied the empty seat. He slid into it, glancing out the window at the airport building of the Chicago terminal. Soon that view would be replaced by one of Mother Earth, three miles below, stretching out in orderly fields and intricately woven streams and highways as the plane flew its course to New York.

New York. He frowned uneasily at the name. In his mind he shoved it away.

Right now there's only the flight, he said to himself. *Only the flight—to enjoy to the exclusion of everything else.*

Someone sat down in the vacant seat beside him. He turned his head

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and glanced at the newcomer. A man. Thin face and capable lips, light blue eyes of the kind that always seem alert and intelligent, hair combed straight back without a part and of a color that was closer to silver than iron-gray.

"You are Peter Hart, aren't you?" the man asked.

"Yes," Pete said. "Sorry, I don't seem to recognize you."

"I thought I recognized you, though it's been quite a few years. I'm Nicholas Archer, though I don't suppose you remember me."

"No, I still don't, Mr. Archer," Pete said. His tone invited further elaboration.

"Is this seat taken?"

Pete looked up at the owner of the rather pleasant female voice. She was standing in the aisle looking at him and ignoring Mr. Archer.

"Of course!" Pete said. "Can't you see —"

"She wants to sit beside you, Peter," Nicholas Archer said, smiling his intellectual, knowing smile. "I'll stand in the aisle. There's going to be one passenger too many anyway, and I may as well be the one who stands this trip." He rose while he was talking, and now stood in the aisle beside the girl. Pete hesitated. "Tell her to sit down," Mr. Archer prompted.

"I guess you can have the seat," Pete said.

"Thank you," she said coldly, still ignoring Mr. Archer's presence.

An impulse possessed Pete to give Mr. Archer his seat and find another. Resentment replaced it.

"Why don't you get another seat?" he said to Mr. Archer.

"No, thank you, Peter," he answered. "I don't mind standing. And please stay seated."

"You certainly are a hateful man for a total stranger," the girl said to Pete. "I assure you I'd find another seat if there were one. Or maybe I wouldn't. Why should I give you that satisfaction?"

Pete blinked at her and turned his eyes hastily back to Mr. Archer who looked slightly distressed, then shrugged.

"Oh!" the girl said furiously. She jerked the flight folio out of its pocket in the back of the seat ahead of her and glared at it in a pretense of reading.

"Look," Pete said. "I don't know what's the matter with you—" He stopped, realizing that he was saying the wrong thing. A malicious thought popped into his mind. He grinned. "You're acting as illogical as a married woman does toward her husband." Having delivered this shot he looked up at Mr. Archer and winked.

"That was unkind, Peter," Mr. Archer said.

Pete looked at the girl. She was still staring at the flight folio, but the anger was gone from her expression. It was thoughtful.

"You know," she said, looking up at Pete abruptly, "I'm a psychologist . . . " She paused, apparently

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parsing what she had said mentally. She started over. "I'm a psychologist. And it suddenly occurs to me that your behavior is very — unusual."

"Ha!" Pete snorted. He turned his head and looked out the window. The motors were being started. He watched the outer prop turn with jerky slowness, catch, become a smooth blur.

He became aware that the girl had placed her hand on his sleeve.

"I'm not kidding," she was saying earnestly. "I thought my clinical internship was complete, but now I realize that you're something new. Do you mind if we—" She paused and took a deep breath before continuing. "—get acquainted? For professional purposes I mean," she added quickly.

A slow grin tugged at Pete's lips.

"That's the newest way of calling a guy a nut—" he started to say, turning his head. Then he stopped.

Mr. Archer was gone. Pete looked up and down the aisle without seeing him. Disappointment filled him. He had wanted to find out more about the man and especially where they had met before. His attention returned to the girl. He looked at her blankly a moment, then: "I'm sorry. What did you say? I forgot."

THE plane began to move. The stewardess passed by, telling them to fasten their seat belts. After that had been done they sat silent, watching the scene outside the window while the plane moved down to the head of the runway and warmed up its four motors.

The motors settled into an even pitch. The plane began to move forward like a runner starting on his toes, picking up speed while pressing the passengers against the backs of their seats.

"My name's Pete Hart," Pete said as the plane hurtled past the terminal buildings.

The girl returned his quick grin. "I'm Doris Evans," she said.

Outside the window and slightly below was a street in which automobile traffic sped along. For a moment it seemed the window must be that of a fifth or sixth floor office building, then the illusion vanished. The street skidded out of range. The skyscrapers of an outlying business center of Chicago perched on a veering horizon, dropping away. White wisps rushed past. For a few seconds there was obscuring fog. Abruptly the plane was riding just above a terrain of white that seemed solid. They were above the clouds.

The *No Smoking Fasten Your Belt* illuminated sign over the door to the control cabin became dark. Pete loosened the belt, sitting up and looking around for Nicholas Archer. He saw the man standing in the aisle at the back of the plane near the rest rooms.

"Pardon me, Doris," he said, standing up.

She pushed back her legs so he could get into the aisle. He strode

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purposefully toward Mr. Archer, who watched him with a friendly, intelligent smile.

Pete opened the door under the sign MEN and stood back, looking at Mr. Archer and nodding toward the open door. Mr. Archer stepped in. Pete followed and closed the door, locking it.

"I'm not exactly stupid, Mr. Archer," he said firmly.

"Of course not, Peter," Mr. Archer said. "Women have that effect on men though. Think nothing of it."

"I'm not talking about that," Pete said. "I'm referring to the simple fact that airlines do not take one extra passenger."

"So?" Mr. Archer said, his eyes laughing merrily.

"So," Pete said, "coupling that with Doris' strange actions, I'm forced to conclude that—well—"

"That no one can see me except you?" Mr. Archer said.

"Something like that," Pete said uncomfortably, unsure of himself.

"Interesting," Mr. Archer said thoughtfully. "It accounts for quite a lot of things, doesn't it." A smile tugged at the corners of his mouth.

"It accounts for Doris' behavior," Pete said. "And makes mine quite unexplainable to her. How could I tell her there was an invisible man sitting beside me when she wanted to sit down?"

"That would sound rather lame, wouldn't it," Mr. Archer agreed. "It would be much more sensible not to try to explain. Just let her continue to think you're eccentric."

"Did you hear what she said to me?" Pete asked. "She said she's a psychologist. She considers me an interesting case."

His short laugh was hollow.

"I gained the impression her interest was more than professional," Mr. Archer said. "And after all, in getting acquainted with one of the opposite sex one must start somewhere."

"Where and when did we meet before?" Pete asked, changing the subject. "You were about to tell me when Doris showed up."

"We lived in the same neighborhood when you were little," Mr. Archer said. "I believe you were five or six then."

"What happened?" Pete asked. "I mean, when did you die?"

"Die?" Mr. Archer said as though the thought hadn't occurred to him before. "I haven't yet." His smile quirked on. "At least so far as I know I haven't."

"You mean you're still alive?" Pete asked, disbelieving. "Then why are you invisible to others? I thought only ghosts were invisible. Have you discovered the secret of invisibility? That would be something . . . free plane rides!"

"I haven't discovered the secret of invisibility," Mr. Archer said. "If I had I would be invisible to you also." He placed his index finger over his lips absently, thinking. "There's one thing that would make this whole thing perfectly sensible,"

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he said. "Suppose we were all ghosts . . . "

"What!" Pete said.

The door rattled impatiently.

"SOMEONE wants to use this place," Mr. Archer said.

"What are you doing on this plane?" Pete asked. "Did you know I was going to be on it?"

"How could I, Peter?" Mr. Archer said. "I haven't seen you in years. Of course not!"

"Then what—?" Pete began. He sighed resignedly and unlocked the door.

Pushing past the rather wide man who was waiting, he went down the aisle and stepped over Doris, avoiding her questioning friendly eyes as he took his seat. He settled himself, exaggerating the process to prolong things while he tried to think of something to say.

Finally he lifted his eyes, pasted a smile on his lips, and turned toward Doris, only to close his eyes hastily and turn back to the window. Mr. Archer was standing in the aisle. Or rather, he was leaning with one elbow against the seat ahead of Doris, staring at her with frankly admiring eyes.

"I'm sorry I said the things I did, Pete," Doris said softly. "Let's start over, huh?"

"I don't know . . ." Pete frowned darkly at the serene farmland revealed fifteen thousand feet below now that the area of clouds was behind. "You practically implied I'm a nut."

"Oh, but I didn't think it," Doris said brightly. "I knew all the time it was just a line—a very effective one, too. It got under my skin, a little, before I realized —"

"Yeah," Pete said, seeing the way out. "It was a line, in a way."

"To make me angry enough to find a different seat so that some man could sit by you."

"How did you guess that?" Pete asked.

"It's perfectly obvious now," Doris said. "And you know, I rather admire men who are woman haters. It bespeaks their good judgment. That way, when the right one comes along they're —"

She left off lamely. Pete turned to look at her, saw Mr. Archer looking at him gravely, and turned back to the window again. Far below a long train was moving snakelike along tiny tracks.

"I know what you mean," he said gently.

"Oh, but I didn't mean it that way," Doris said hastily. "Don't get me wrong."

"I know you didn't, Doris," Pete said, wondering what she was talking about. "I'm not exactly stupid."

He turned to Doris and smiled reassuringly. Mr. Archer was grinning delightedly. Inspiration struck Pete between the eyes.

"It reminds me of a quotation from John Evans, I think," he said. "The quotation goes —" He fixed Mr. Archer with an intent stare that

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could be mistaken by Doris for concentration on one's thoughts and said slowly, "Why don't you wipe that stupid grin off your face and get the hell out of here, Mr. Archer?"

"Sorry, Peter," Mr. Archer said. "I didn't realize I was making you uncomfortable." He straightened and started down the aisle.

Pete dropped his eyes to Doris's puzzled face.

"Very appropriate — of me, I mean. Don't you think?" Pete said brightly.

"Y-yes . . ." Doris said. "That is, if I get what you're driving at, no. I wouldn't go so far as to say that of you. *To* you, rather." She laughed lightly as though enjoying her own wit, the laughter ending on a vague note as though she hadn't seen the point to it.

"Well, maybe it wasn't as appropriate a quotation as I thought at first," Pete said, willing to concede the point and change the subject. A quick glance showed Mr. Archer sitting on the metal table very close to a stewardess who was getting things ready to serve lunch to the passengers. He was swinging his legs idly, his lips pursed into a whistle, his eyes on the ceiling.

"Pete—" It was Doris, her voice low and earnest. She placed her hand on his arm. He looked at her. "Where are you going to stay in New York?"

"At the Claridge," he answered. "I always stay there. Why?"

She took her hand away and lowered her eyes. "Is it a nice hotel? I—I don't know where I'm going to stay. Would it be all right if I stayed there too?"

"Why sure," Pete said. "Say, that'll be swell. We can have dinner together this evening."

New York! It was back again. Pete turned to the window, his thoughts churning. Cumulus clouds hovered stationary over the ground, seeming like unformed milestones that marched past under the plane, measuring off the distance . . .

"Pete," Doris said, her hand on his arm again. "What's wrong?"

He looked down at her hand where it rested. He raised his head and looked down the length of the plane at Mr. Archer who was watching him with that alert aura of bright intelligence that seemed to surround him so firmly that it was at once benign and in a way sinister. He turned back to the window.

"What's wrong, Peter?" Doris repeated softly, her voice barely audible. When he didn't answer she added wistfully, "You'd be surprised how much I could help you."

"Why don't you tell her your troubles, Peter?" It was Mr. Archer's voice. Pete jerked his head around. Mr. Archer was standing beside Doris, his finely molded face and intelligent eyes expressing sympathetic concern.

"Why don't you go sit on a tack?" Pete said to both of them, turning his face to the window again.

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* * *

THE Statue of Liberty served as an axis for the slowly revolving Earth for several long seconds while the lower end of Manhattan swung ponderously. A ship and its wake rested in frozen movement on the water. Then the too perfect geometricity of Brooklyn was rushing past, Queens, with Flushing on the horizon while the sound of the motors changed and the flaps crept out to add their depth to the wings. Flushing Bay and the East River were a surface of dirty glass below as the plane dipped down.

A mild thump, then the plane was riding over the concrete landing strip toward approaching buildings of La Guardia Airport. A pygmy in uniform waved his arm officiously while the plane swung on one wheel with elephantine dignity and came to a final stop with the motors dying to silence. Two men wheeled the landing platform toward the ship . . .

"I'll see you at the baggage counter, Doris," Pete said cheerfully, heading toward the men's room.

There were phone booths. He looked back to make sure Doris was out of sight then stepped into one. He dropped his nickel and dialed the number with nervous rapidity.

He listened to the phone at the other end ring three times. It stopped. Someone had lifted the receiver. Several seconds passed, then, "Hello?" It was almost inaudible.

"Alloh. Ees thees Tony Marcotti ressidents?" Pete said, his voice throaty.

"No. You have the wrong number," the voice at the other end said.

Peter Hart listened to the click of the phone at the other end as it was diconnected. He hung up and glanced furtively out to make sure no one was looking into the booth.

Working with nervous haste he took three small packages from pockets and unwrapped them. The compactly designed metal parts from the three packages fitted together under his deft manipulation to form an object vaguely similar to a revolver barrel six inches long with one end capped and a small lever nestled against the surface near the end. The hole in the other end seemed hardly large enough to insert a sewing needle.

He put the assembled piece into his right coat pocket, crumpled up the wrapping paper and dropped it on the floor of the booth, then stepped out.

At the baggage counter Doris greeted him with a smile.

"Baggage here yet, Doris?" he asked.

"Not yet," she said.

"Would you do me an awfully big favor?" he said. "I've got to pick up something before five o'clock down on Wall Street and it's after four now. Would you get my bag and take it to the hotel for me? It's a Sampson bag. Brown. Just take it along with your stuff and I'll get it from your room at the hotel when

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I call for our dinner date around seven. Okay?"

She nodded and took the baggage check he held out to her.

"Be seeing you," he murmured. He turned and headed for the taxi stand without a backward glance.

IN the taxi he settled back after giving the address. His hand went into his pocket, fingers wrapping around the slim metal object.

"Do you mind if I ride along with you, Peter?" a familiar voice spoke beside him.

Pete jerked around, a glint of anger in his eyes.

"Oh," he grunted. "It's you. No, I don't mind. Where are you going? I'll have the driver let you off."

"With you," Mr. Archer said.

"To the hotel?" Pete said. "I'm not going directly to the hotel. I'm going down to Wall Street first."

"I don't mind," Mr. Archer said. "I'll ride along."

"Okay," Pete said, grinning nervously. "You can wait in the taxi while I do my errand, then we can go to the hotel together."

"Thank you, Peter," Mr. Archer said.

It was ten minutes to five when the taxi drew into the curb at the entrance to the building.

"Wait here," Pete said, both to the driver and to Mr. Archer. He got out and crossed the sidewalk into the building.

The lobby corridor went straight back through the building to the back street, intersecting another that went to the two side streets. He walked hurriedly down one of these, left the building, and took another taxi.

Ten minutes later after a short taxi trip, an equally short trip on the subway, and two blocks of gloomy sidewalk, he stood contemplating the much painted and pocket-knife-marred door to an ancient walkup apartment.

The hall was gloomy and unlit, and deserted. From somewhere above a nasal female voice whined in gossipy tones, the words indistinguishable. From far away traffic noises drifted in, carrying with them the banging of freightcars being hooked together.

Pete took the metal object from his pocket and held it gingerly in his right hand, moving it experimentally until he was satisfied with his grip.

He glanced down at the faint line of light under the door. His phone call had already assured him that Ralph Dexter would be home.

He lifted his left hand to knock, and paused. Somewhat surprised he was realizing that now his nervousness was gone. He was perfectly calm. His knuckles rapped against the panel. Almost immediately there was a shuffling of feet inside. They came close and stopped.

The door opened until there was a three inch gap, a chain preventing it from opening further. A face peered out. Ralph Dexter's mouth

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opened to form words that were never to be uttered. A fine puncture appeared on his right cheek near the nose at the same instant that a brittly sharp sound exploded into the atmosphere, a noise totally unlike that of gunfire.

Peter Hart was already disassembling the strange weapon as he hurried from the building. Its seventeen parts, each lying alone in widely separated places between Greenwich Village and Wall Street, would never be taken for parts of a murder weapon.

* * *

"YOU'RE different than you were," Doris said across the table. "I don't know whether I like it or not."

"In what way?" Pete asked, dipping his spoon into the stuffed avocado pear.

"I don't know exactly," she said. "It's a sort of composite differentness. Made up of a dozen infinitesimal alterations. If I had known you a long time I might just put it down to a change of mood. Perhaps that's all it is."

"But you don't like it?" Pete asked. "That's funny. You complained of my being practically a nut when we were on the plane. Now I behave like a human being and you don't like me."

"I didn't say that," Doris said. "But your saying it illustrates what I mean. It's something very complex. The only thing I know of to compare it to is a boxing match I saw once. I watched the one fighter particularly. One round he seemed unsure of himself, ducking when the other man wasn't striking out, over cautious. The next round when he came out of his corner he was completely changed. Instead of ducking he seemed to move around the other man's blows. Instead of being cautious he advanced confidently, searching for openings to strike. There's that same subtle change in you since this afternoon."

"And you don't like it," Pete said. "I think I know why. This afternoon you thought you saw a subject to study. A nut. Now you think you see a normal man. Normalcy doesn't interest your professional mind."

"Just the opposite," Doris said with a bland smile. "This afternoon I saw a man deeply troubled about something. Something that could lead to mental trouble. This evening —that glare coming into your eyes right now—"

"Sorry," Pete said coldly. "Did anyone ever tell you a normal man hates a woman who spends all her time with him dissecting him?"

"I suppose that's true," Doris said, sighing. "But I feel that that glare you gave me wouldn't have been possible this afternoon. It was the glare of a spoiled four-year-old boy, or of a caged wildcat being tormented by someone on the other side of the bars. It's—"

"Paper mister?"

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Pete glanced at the urchin holding out the paper. He caught the word GREENWICH and guessed what the rest of the headline would be.

"No thanks," he said curtly.

"I believe I'll have one," Doris said, opening her purse.

Pete dipped into his stuffed avocado.

"Thanks lady," the urchin said. He turned bright black eyes on Pete for a second then went on to the next table.

"A murder in Greenwich Village," Doris said. "A man by the name of Ralph Dexter. Did you ever know a man by that name, Peter?"

"Don't call me Peter," Pete said. "Call me Pete. No. That is, I may have. I can't tell you offhand the names of everyone I've ever known. And anyway there are probably at least half a dozen Ralph Dexters in the United States."

"I suppose so," Doris said absently.

Pete looked up from his avocado pear. She had opened the paper to an ad for women's clothes and was studying it intently as though she had forgotten the headlines. Pete studied her uneasily.

"I would say she's an excellent actress," a familiar voice said. Pete glanced up sharply. Mr. Archer was standing beside the table. Pete looked down at his plate again quickly. "She saw you were getting to the point where you might walk away and leave her," Mr. Archer continued in his unemotional intellectual manner, "and very adroitly pretended her mind had gone other places. I would say she's very dangerous."

Pete scraped the last bit of edible substance from the avocado shell, laid the emptied spoon on the plate, and took out a cigaret with trembling fingers. He lifted his gaze as he lit it. Doris was regarding him silently.

"She has laid a trap that you unwittingly walked into, too," Mr. Archer said calmly. "You've denied knowing Ralph Dexter. If the police question you and she finds out you did know him she'll remember. You should have admitted that you know him."

"What's the matter?" Doris asked. "You're looking like you did on the plane again."

"I—" Pete hesitated. "I just remembered. I do know a Ralph Dexter in New York."

"That was a mistake too," Mr. Archer said. "Now you've given her something concrete to go on. First you denied knowing the man, now you've admitted it. Food for her sharp mind."

"It's probably not that one," Pete said hastily.

"But it might be," Doris said quickly. "Here's his picture. Is this the one you knew?" She held the front page up. A picture of the familiar face was there.

"See what I mean?" Mr. Archer

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said with maddening calm. "Now if you deny he's the one you're in for it worse than ever."

"It c—could be him," Pete hesitated. "I didn't know him too well."

"Crude," Mr. Archer said. "She saw by your expression that you know him—and also that you knew it would be his picture."

Pete turned angrily to Mr. Archer and opened his mouth to tell him to shut up then slowly clamped his jaws together. That would be the last straw, he decided, to have Doris see him talking to the man who isn't there again.

"I'll be back in a minute, Pete."

PETE became aware that Doris had risen. He nodded without speaking, and watched her go toward the back of the restaurant. When she was out of sight he turned to Mr. Archer with quiet fierceness.

"Now, Mr. Archer," he said between stiff lips, "let me warn you to leave me alone. *I* didn't muff things. It was your interference. I'll stand for no more of it."

"But what can you do about it?" Mr. Archer said, a quiet smile tugging at the corners of his intelligent mouth.

"And what can you do?" Pete mocked. "Can you tell anyone what you know? And you know nothing, really. If you were able to stand witness against me I would be more careful about admitting anything."

"*I'm* no threat," Mr. Archer said. "But you are—to yourself. You know, your present position interests me exceedingly. The difference between the murderer and the police is always one of quality rather than quantity. A qualitative difference, I mean. The police can make any number of mistakes so long as they come out with the right answer at the end. The murderer is in a different position. He's done something final and irrevocable. No matter how strongly he might want to change things, the basic fact always remains that there is a corpse that will remain a corpse, and a law against murder that will always be there to avenge that change of state of the victim."

"So what?" Pete mumbled.

"It—it's like a bad bowler spotting God three hundred pins," Mr. Archer said, "and then staking his own life on one game." He paused, frowning thoughtfully, then chuckled. "And letting the Devil hold the stakes," he added.

"You make it sound inevitable," Pete said, "but don't forget that the police aren't God. What have they got to go on? Widely scattered parts of a weapon no one could assemble properly unless they knew beforehand what it was. Nothing directing suspicions toward me, and even if they did turn their search in my direction they couldn't prove anything. Not to a jury."

Pete was mildly enjoying the conversation now. He had leaned back, turning his face so that to those around him his position would seem natural. His speech was like that of

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a ventriloquist, with lips barely moving and his voice not carrying as far as the next table.

"But the stakes are your life," Mr. Archer said calmly. "You won't forget that. Not for a minute. When Doris was here I tied you up so that you were giving yourself away right and left. What do you think an expert could do?"

Pete licked his lips. His mouth felt dry.

"There's no reason for them to turn their eyes my way," he said tonelessly.

"But they will," Mr. Archer said. "They'll examine every lead. Is there a letter from you in Ralph Dexter's files? Of course there is. They'll try to contact you—and be very interested to learn that you arrived in town in time to have committed the murder."

"I've taken care of that," Pete said.

"Have you?" Mr. Archer said. "The bare fact will intrigue them, just the same. And what if some street urchin finds one of the parts of the weapon?"

"It wouldn't mean anything to him," Pete said calmly. "No, Mr. Archer. I've thought of everything. All I have to do is to keep calm and not do anything. They'll never prove anything."

"I agree," Mr. Archer said quickly. "All you have to do is keep calm and not do anything. But can you?"

Doris appeared in Pete's range of vision. He smiled lazily at her as though he had been half asleep. Mr. Archer smiled at her also, and stepped aside to avoid her bumping into him. She returned Pete's smile and sat down.

The waiter brought the soup. They went through it in silence, ordered their entree, and sat back, eyeing each other.

"Peter," Doris said suddenly. She remembered he didn't like that name and said, "Pete, why did you kill Ralph Dexter?"

"I DIDN'T," he said, suddenly calm and preternaturally sure of himself. "What gave you such a silly idea?"

For an instant doubt appeared on Doris's face, but it didn't remain.

"That would convince me if I weren't so sure," she said. "But there are too many things. I didn't go to the ladies' room as you thought. I went to where I could watch you. You exhibited every sign of talking covertly to someone standing beside the table. Not until then did I realize that when I first met you you were doing the same thing. Do you know what that means? It means that under some great stress your mind has split into two personalities. One part of you has become intolerable to the other and the schism has tried to satisfy both."

"Yes?" Pete said, an unamused grin distorting his features. "You think a counterpart of myself was standing by the table and I was talking to it?"

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"Oh no. No," Doris said. "It never works that way. The good part of you that refused to remain integrated into your personality had to have some identity. It probably took the identity of someone you admired very much at some time in your past. Your father, a friend, a relative . . ."

"You're wrong," Pete said, "but suddenly I realize I don't like you. To you all men will be merely subjects of study. There isn't a womanly reaction in you." His grin became a wolfish snarl. "What you should do," he said, getting up and dropping his napkin beside his plate with an air of finality, "is see a good psychiatrist."

"I'm going to the police," Doris said calmly, her voice low.

Pete blinked at her, thinking fast. "Back in a moment, dear," he murmured for the benefit of those at nearby tables. He walked down the aisle between tables to the back and the men's washroom.

"So now you intend to kill Doris!" Mr. Archer said when they were alone inside.

"What makes you think so?" Pete asked in a monotonous tone. He ran some water in the washbasin and lathered his hands absently.

"Why else would you change your mind about giving her the gate and just walking out?" Mr. Archer said. "If she goes to the police she can't prove anything, but think how eager they will be to grab the straw she hands them. They'll never let go."

Pete dabbed his hands on the towel and pushed open the door, ignoring Mr. Archer. When he rounded the corner and could see his table he stopped. Doris wasn't there.

Alarmed, he looked quickly toward the front of the restaurant. She was just going out the door.

He took out his billfold and extracted a five dollar bill to cover the unfinished meals. He dropped it on the table as he hurried by.

"The note the lady left . . ." the waiter called to him as he reached the door.

He looked back. The waiter was holding out an oblong of white paper invitingly. He could go back and get it—but then Doris could find a taxi and get away. Hesitating no longer, he pushed open the doors and stepped out onto the sidewalk.

Doris was twenty feet away, walking toward the Avenue of the Americas. He walked swiftly, catching up with her. She looked fearfully over her shoulder at him, seemed about to run, then slowed to let him catch up.

He wrapped his fingers firmly about her arm as he fell into step beside her.

"You weren't *really* going to run away from me, were you?" he asked tauntingly.

Beside them was the yawning emptiness of a narrow areaway whose depths were totally obscured by darkness.

"Let's go in here, darling," he said, putting gentle but inexorable

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strength into the guidance of his hand as he turned her into the darkness . . .

* * *

"YOU should have gone back and got the note, Peter," Mr. Archer said, hurrying along beside him.

"You know as well as I do that there wasn't time," Pete said. "Listen!"

The sound of sirens rose to dominate the other night sounds of New York.

"See?" Pete said. "She could be seen vaguely from the sidewalk. Someone was sure to investigate. I would have been caught in the restaurant."

"Are you going back to the hotel?" Mr. Archer asked, then went on, "I suppose you have to, but I can't see how you're going to get away with this second murder."

"There would be a third if I could get my hands on you," Pete said grimly.

"You're getting irrational, Peter," Mr. Archer said. "That's the trouble with murder. You plan it carefully, but you never know what you'll do or how you'll react afterward. Having the direct threat of personal death in the electric chair hanging over you brings out things in you."

"You're just excited," Pete said. "Actually it's quite simple. The only possible connection between me and Doris is the note. Until today we didn't know each other. The probability is that the note won't do the police any good even if they do get it. We left the restaurant separately. There was no fuss that anyone could notice. And even if the waiter sees her body—which is unlikely since he's too busy to go out on the sidewalk and gawk with the crowd—he won't be able to give a good enough description of me to do the police any good. I've done the only sensible thing. All along the line I've done things correctly."

"It seems to me," Mr. Archer said, "that it's like being in a funnel. You're doing the right things to keep from falling down into the neck—but you'll wind up there anyway."

"Nonsense," Pete said. "No one can connect me with either of them now. You don't count, you know." He chuckled at this shot. "I'm going back to the hotel just like nothing had happened—and await developments."

A police car was parked at the entrance of the hotel. Pete hesitated, then went ahead. More than likely it had nothing to do with the murder, he decided.

The doorman gave the swinging doors a push to start them, nodding respectfully to Pete. Inside, the lobby seemed deserted. The elevator girl stood beside the marble pillar with the open doors of the elevator at her back. With a grunt of relief Pete started up the steps of the lobby toward her.

"That's him!" a voice exploded. In the same instant Pete felt both

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his arms seized and pinned, and hands were expertly slapping his clothing in a search for weapons.

"What is this?" he said inanely. But his eyes were drawn to the face of the waiter.

"Easy, fella," a grim faced man beside him said softly.

"What's this all about?" Pete asked, pretending to be puzzled.

"I warned you, Peter," Mr. Archer said. He was standing to one side, erect, his silver-white hair seeming more than ever a crown atop his finely wrought, intelligently expressive features. "If you hadn't taken this way your future would have straightened out . . ."

"This," the grim faced man said, holding up a rectangle of paper.

Pete looked at it. It bore the hotel letterhead. Under the letterhead was scrawled a large "Peter" with two verticle dashes that were obviously meant to be a colon or semicolon. Underneath, scrawled in slanting lines, was the tersely fatal note. "I'm going to the police about Dexter before you find a way to kill me too."

His eyes went to the revolving doors. There was no one outside. If he could get through them . . . get away . . .

He relaxed visibly, felt the hands pinning his arms weaken their grasp. He jerked loose with sudden violence and leaped toward the only avenue of possible escape. But arms circled his waist, holding him back.

His desperate fingers forced themselves under the pinning arms and tried to pry them loose. His breath was coming in sobbing gasps. And even as he tried to get free, deep within him was rising a mute, shuddering protest against the fates that had caused him to do the one thing that can never be undone afterward . . . to kill.

"Easy, fella," the voice of the grim faced man said.

Pete paused in his struggle to blink at the face. Only it wasn't the face of a man. It was the face of a woman, familiar, somehow.

"Take it easy," she said in her masculinely keyed voice.

He blinked at her. Then something made him look down at his waist where his hands still gripped the encircling arms. Only they weren't arms. The broad belt of the seat safety straps of the plane were firmly buckled there.

He jerked his head up to look at his surroundings. He was in a plane. The plane in which he had come to New York.

"You were asleep," the woman was saying. "I took the liberty of fastening your belt rather than waking you. We're coming into La Guardia now." She chuckled sympathetically. "You must have been having a nightmare."

PETE looked out the window. The wing flaps were out. Underneath were the waters of Flushing Bay and the East River. He expelled a long, slow breath, relaxing, his suddenly tired hands slipping out from under

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the canvas safety strap.

Memory of his surroundings was returning. He looked at the woman sitting beside him, and smiled. This was Doris Evans sitting beside him. She had given her name to the stewardess just before he fell asleep. And just before he fell asleep he had felt a wish that she were young and beautiful, instead of so adult and so like a capable business woman or doctor . . .

"Guess I must have," he said ruefully.

There was a mild thump, then the plane was riding over the concrete landing strip toward approaching buildings of La Guardia. A pygmy in uniform waved his arms officiously while the plane swung on one wheel with elephantine dignity and came to a final stop with motors coughing into silence. Two men were wheeling the landing platform toward the ship . . .

Pete smiled vaguely at Doris Evans. She looked as though she wanted to say something. He turned his eyes away from her and looked around the waiting room. He saw a sign that said TELEPHONES.

"Maybe I'll see you at the baggage counter," he said to her, smiling politely and moving away.

At the phone booths he looked back. She was out of sight. Stepping into a booth he closed the door. He dialed his number with nervous rapidity.

He listened to the phone at the other end ring three times. It stopped. Someone had lifted the receiver. Several seconds passed, then, "Hello?" It was almost inaudible.

"Hello," Pete said. "Is this Ralph Dexter?"

* * *

"THE cosmos is a balance of titanic opposing force," Ralph Dexter said. He flavored each word with the same relish that he had just wet his lips with the peach liquor in the delicately fragile bit of stemware held by his long, slender fingers. "Take the components of your body for example, Peter. The electrons, repelled from the earth with thousands of tons of force by the electrons of the earth, and attracted with almost equal tons by the protons of the earth, so that the resultant is an almost perfect cancellation. And the protons of your body, being at once attracted and repelled in the same way. Forces that would make the atom bomb look puny. We know they are there, balanced, the one against the other. We have learned a few of the tricks of unbalancing them—and generating the vast power networks that run the factories, the ships, the refrigerator . . ."

His voice drifted into silence as he lifted the glass to his lips again, to let the liquor merely wet his tongue. "Why do you stare at my right cheek so intently, Pete?" he asked casually without looking at him. "Is there something there?" He

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lifted a finger and rubbed it lightly over his cheek and the side of his nose.

Peter Hart flicked the ash from his cigaret onto the already dirty rug of the gloomy room in an effort to mask his feelings.

A low chuckle came from Ralph Dexter's sensuous lips. "Or were you imagining a bullet hole there?" he said. "There again—opposing forces. Mental forces. The urge to kill me, balanced against the instinct of self preservation. So delicately balanced . . ." His voice drifted off again as his eyes came to rest for the first time directly on his visitor, one corner of his mouth drooping into what would have been a smile of bitter disillusionment in any other person.

Peter concentrated his gaze on the tip of his cigaret, acutely conscious of the unkempt figure slouched sideways on an ancient kitchen chair, one arm hooked over its back and bearing the full weight of the slouched shoulders.

"You have brought an exact duplicate of the guided missile orienter?" Ralph Dexter said suddenly.

From three different pockets Pete brought three small packages, laying them in his lap.

"Unwrap and assemble it, please," Dexter said quietly.

His eyes watched sharply, warily, as Peter unwrapped the small packages and fitted the gleaming metal parts together. Then suddenly his eyes widened. He leaned forward, holding out his hand.

"Give it to me," he ordered sharply.

His face expressionless, Pete handed over the assembled object. Dexter took it, turning it over in his hand, studying it.

"How does it work?" he asked. "It looks more like a freak gun than an orienter."

"It *could* be used as a gun," Pete said. "An explosive charge behind the sliding metal plug, a method of exploding it. But it's actually a carefully designed valve, activated by the slightest change in trajectory of the missile brought about by atmosphere."

"I see," Ralph Dexter said.

The silence that settled in the drab room seemed to Pete to press in around him. He thought of what Dexter had said about balanced forces, and in his mind's eye he pictured the silence as being the focal point of the infinite reaches of space, converging about him, held away from him only by their balanced opposing strengths.

A sharp sound exploded in the silence, unlike the sound of a shot, yet sharp.

Pete slowly lifted his cigaret to his lips and sucked in deeply, his veiled eyes watching Ralph Dexter's shocked surprise as he looked from the metal shape in his hand to the almost invisible puncture in the wall.

"So . . ." Dexter said, amazement and awakened interest in the breathed sound. "It *was* a weapon. You were planning to use it." He turned

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the weapon around in his hand, re-examining it. "It is *nothing* but a weapon. Why didn't you use it, Peter? Why didn't you point it at that place on my cheek you were staring so intently at a few moments ago?"

He raised his liquor glass to his lips and sipped without taking his rounded eyes from Peter's face.

Peter tried to talk. His voice rasped. He cleared his throat and began again. "Because of a dream," he said.

Something in the droop of Ralph Dexter's shoulders told him that the man was off balance, afraid. And it acted as a tonic on his own spirits. He was suddenly sure of himself and no longer afraid of what might come.

"In the dream I killed you, Dexter," he said. "Then I found out that I couldn't get away with it. Only—" He paused, frowning. "I wish I knew who Nicholas Archer was."

"THIS—weapon," Ralph Dexter said. "It's no dream. You must have constructed it planning on killing me."

"I did," Pete said. "I had it all planned. You know how you always keep your night chain on until you open the door and see who it is? I had it all planned that when you did that I was going to shoot you, then disassemble the weapon and scatter its parts, none of which look like parts of a gun."

"Clever," Dexter mused. "You might have gotten away with it, too. You came to New York with the intention of doing it?"

"Yes," Pete said calmly.

"You didn't bring the parts of the guided missile orienter?" Dexter asked.

"No," Pete said.

The silence became heavy again as Dexter frowned at the weapon, pondering the situation.

"And you aren't going to bring me the orienter?" he asked.

"No," Pete said. "You see, Dexter, I realize now that to bring it is only to prolong the inevitable. If I kill you I lose. If I keep on betraying the secrets of my country I will eventually be caught. If I refuse to any more you might have me liquidated—or you might leave me alone."

"No no," Dexter said. "I couldn't leave you alone. The others, the hundreds of others, would try to follow your example. You know that." His voice was nasal, protesting, patient. "You will be singled out for an investigation. It will be proven that you have handed secrets over to me. You will be disgraced while everyone receives added proof that the party is able to wrest top secrets from this government." He smiled. "You see, even in losing you we have a use for you. Others will take your place, just as the atoms of your body are replaced by other atoms, so that the whole remains the same . . ." He studied Pete with

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his eyes. "I can't understand you," he said.

An expression of irritation crossed his face. He jerked his arm, sending the weapon violently against a baseboard where it rebounded and dropped to the floor.

"And what you can't understand you fear?" Pete said quietly.

"I fear nothing," Ralph Dexter said, getting to his feet and pacing the floor, kicking a piece of crumpled notepaper out of his path. "But there is something definitely screwy to this picture. I can't believe that about a dream. No." He walked back and forth with a scowl of concentration on his features. Suddenly he stopped, fixing Pete with an intent stare. "This Nicholas Archer you mentioned. Who is he?"

"Part of the dream," Pete said. He grinned.

"Bah!" Dexter exploded. He resumed his pacing. He stopped again, pulling at his lower lip with a finger and thumb. "Let us suppose that you have contacted the FBI," he mused. "They would like to find out a lot of things. They ordered you to pull this stuff about wanting to murder me and changing your mind because of a dream. They would expect me to set in motion the machinery to have you exposed as a traitor . . ." He shook his head slowly. "But then why the dream, to make me suspicious? It could have worked by your simply refusing to work with me any more. Then I would have gone ahead . . ." He went to his chair and sat down, placing his hands on his knees. "This dream. Would you tell it to me?"

"Why not?" Pete said, shrugging. In a low voice he told the whole dream. Ralph Dexter listened, occasionally nodding. When he had finished, silence settled in the room again.

"All right," Dexter said finally. "I believe you. You can go now."

"Go?" Pete said, taken by surprise. "But—what are you going to do?"

Dexter's smile was broad, overly smooth.

"Nothing," he said. "Isn't that what you wanted? To leave here a free man again?"

"Yes," Pete gulped. "But—but I can't imagine you doing nothing. I *know* you're going to do something. What—?"

Dexter's smile broadened. He was once again his own sure self, holding the upper hand.

"Good bye, Peter Hart," he said, mocking tones in the background of his voice.

Pete stood up, paused in indecision, then went to the door. Ralph Dexter didn't rise. Pete looked at him from the open door, seeing the smile slowly dying, a merciless light growing in Dexter's soulless eyes. He stepped out into the hall, slamming the door behind him. He took the steps two at a time, running down and out into the street.

* * *

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DORIS Evans watched Peter Hart's blind departure with puzzled eyes. When his footsteps had ended she stepped out of her hiding place, an unused janitor's closet, and stole noiselessly to the door he had emerged from, placing her ear against the panel.

She had heard enough while Pete was inside to know that the man still in there was Ralph Dexter, and that he was alone now. Was his name really Ralph Dexter? Hardly, she decided. Muffled though it had been through the door it had sounded familiar to her, and she had never known a Ralph Dexter.

Standing back from the door she studied it, looking for a pinhole or crack that she might place her eye to and see inside. There was nothing.

But wait—there was the crack under the door. Three-eighths of an inch. She opened her purse and took out a small rectangular mirror. It would be just the thing.

She got down on her knees and laid the mirror flat on the floor, sliding it carefully under the door until it was half way under.

"Risky . . ." her lips formed. "If Dexter happens to glance toward the door . . ."

But she knew she had to take that chance.

She arched sidewise, ignoring the filth that was gathering on her clothes, and peered through the mirror. It took a moment for her to realize what she was seeing. It was the toe of a shoe. Ralph Dexter was standing just inside the door!

Did he know someone was out in the hall? Was he preparing to fling the door open and confront her with a gun?

With a feeling of panic Doris reached inside her coat and brought out a flat thirty-eight automatic. She waited. The doorknob didn't move.

She risked another glance through the mirror. The shoe was still there. It hadn't moved.

It hadn't moved! Suddenly suspicious, she laid the gun down and moved the mirror. There was only one shoe in front of the door.

Abandoning caution she got to her feet and tried the knob. The door was unlocked. She flung it open, hearing the scraping sound as the door pushed the shoe along the floor.

The room was empty.

"Darn!" she said. "Dexter stuck that shoe where I could see it just to make me wait. He saw my mirror go under the door."

She stepped inside and closed the door, looking around for some sign of the man's avenue of escape. There were two doors. As she hesitated she heard a door close. She turned in the direction of the sound. Seconds later she stood at the back door of the apartment. There was a small porch, with stairs leading upward and downward.

Something below darted out into the alley, a vague form carrying a suitcase. It ran up the alley.

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Gripping her gun in her hand Doris ran down the rickety steps. She reached the bottom as the fleeing figure reached the mouth of the alley. It paused and looked back. She tried to glimpse the face turned toward her, but the light, what there was of it, was from in back of the figure, silhouetting rather than revealing it. Then the man had vanished to the left.

She cursed her high heels as she half stumbled, half ran over the broken pavement of the alley. As she turned the corner onto the sidewalk a car pulled away from the curb a quarter of a block away, motor racing and lights out. It roared around the corner and was gone. There would be no way of catching up with it.

Doris stopped running and stood still, looking dejectedly down the empty street. She became aware that the gun still dangled in her hand. With a sigh she put it back in its shoulder holster.

"I could cry," she said aloud. "I'd swear I've heard that man's voice before somewhere."

She began walking toward the corner around which Dexter had made his escape, slapping at the dust on her business suit as she walked.

* * *

PETE stopped running when he reached the sidewalk. His flight hadn't been as blind as it had appeared. As he had gone to the door of Dexter's apartment he had heard a hasty step outside. And when he had stepped out he had seen Doris Evans' white face peering from the crack of the janitor's closet. Enough of her face to be sure it was she.

Now, standing on the sidewalk, full realization of his position settled on him. She had been sitting by him on the plane. She had followed him to Dexter's place. If she weren't with the FBI he didn't know what else she could be connected with. That meant that they suspected him.

Why hadn't they arrested him already? Obviously they had waited in the hopes that he would lead them to Dexter. And he had.

Now they'll clamp down on me, he thought bitterly.

It was the end. He could see that. If Dexter didn't see that he was exposed as a traitor who had been giving secrets to the enemy, the FBI would do it anyway.

He could drop out of sight, but what good would that do? If he changed his name he couldn't get work. He wouldn't have a social security number. His training wouldn't do him any good either. If he tried to use his degrees to get a position as an engineer or physicist they would check up and find no degrees issued to whatever fictitious name he gave.

Unconsciously he had started walking. He became aware that he was passing the dimly lit front of a bar. A drink would go good, he decided.

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Inside was a row of empty booths along one wall, the bar along the other, half a dozen men slouched along the counter. The bartender looked at him questioningly as he hesitated. He went down the bar and took a seat well removed from his nearest neighbors.

"Beer?" the bartender asked.

Pete nodded, and took out a cigaret while the bartender brought the glass of beer.

"Sightseeing?" the bartender asked conversationally. He took Pete's blank stare for an affirmative answer. "That little guy down the bar to your right there," he said out of the corner of his mouth, "he's what's left of Bugs Calahan. Ever hear of him? They say he killed fourteen men in his day. Know what they sent him up for? Stolen car. That's all they could pin on him—and that was a frame."

Pete looked down the bar at the hollow-chested man the bartender was talking about. The man was little. Standing, he would be no more than five-four. Probably wouldn't weigh over one-ten, he decided.

Bugs Calahan's face was arresting. Eyes that drooped like a snake's half asleep. Lips that were no more than a split of the dead white skin of the sallow face. Thin black hair combed straight back and pasted down with something. Cigaret dangling, its thin ribbon of smoke rising past an insensitive razor-thin nose.

"Ten cents, please," the bartender said.

"Huh?" Pete said, jerking around. He looked down at the glass of beer and said, "Oh."

He fished some change out of his pocket and picked out a dime. Dropping the change back in his pocket he gulped the beer and left.

Fifteen minutes later he emerged from the subway across the street from the Times Building. He joined the moving throng along Broadway, his face revealing nothing of his inner torment.

At Forty-fourth he hurried the few steps to the revolving doors of the hotel. As he went through the doors he remembered the dream. It was here that they caught up with him—and he emerged from the dream to find himself still in the plane, just coming into La Guardia.

And Mr. Archer had been standing on the steps . . .

AN hour later as the plane he was on passed over the Hudson and his eyes went southward to the mid-Manhattan skyline, etching its details into memory as the symbol of his past, the past he was turning his back on forever in his flight into anonymity, tears blurred his vision.

Of all the past, his work, his life, he knew that the thing he would miss most of all was—Nicholas Archer.

"Your name please?"

Pete turned his attention to the smiling stewardess.

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"My name?" he echoed. "Oh yes. Ah—Alfred Blanning."

Her pencil went down the list and paused. "Cincinnati?" she asked.

"Uh—yes," he said. "But I'm going to Los Angeles. Emergency trip. This was the first plane I could get."

"I hope there's a cancellation at Cincinnati so you can stay on, Mr. Blanning," she said, smiling.

"I hope so too," he said, following her with his eyes as she continued down the aisle.

* * *

"SOMETIMES I think I'm not cut out for this business," Doris Evans said, scooping cold cream out of the heavy jar and swiping it over her face. "Nothing went as it should have. A simple assignment. Hah! A scientist named Peter Hart suspected of giving information to a spy. All I have to do is follow Hart, find out where the spy lives, and get a look at him if I can."

She took a towel and rubbed her face briskly, revealing features that would have amazed Pete if he had been there to see. They were the features of the Doris Evans in his dream.

"What happens?" she went on, grimacing at her image in the mirror and taking out powder and lipstick. "While I'm sitting beside him on the plane he has a nightmare. A trick of his subconscious makes him use my name for a girl in the dream. After all my careful disguise designed to cause him to take one look at me and then ignore me and forget about me, he strips it off in his dream."

"It was an interesting dream," Herbert Carter said. He sat spraddled on a chair, using its back to prop his elbows, regarding Doris gravely. "Scientists have peculiar minds. His subconscious automatically registered every waking impression and stored it away. In the dream it was solving a problem—a problem of murder. It correctly interpreted you as a direct threat to his safety if he did it. Perhaps his subconscious had recognized what you are in spite of your disguise."

"Bosh," Doris said, looking around briefly, then returning to her makeup. "When did he see me before?"

"The result is obvious, anyway," Herbert Carter said. "The dream gave him the conclusion that he would be caught if he murdered the man, so on waking he chose the path of no murder."

"But look what he did, Herb," Doris said. "In so many words he told this Ralph Dexter that a female agent named Doris Evans had ridden on the plane with him to New York."

"That told Dexter that undoubtedly someone had followed him to Greenwich Village, and was probably outside the door listening," Herb Carter grinned.

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"I think so," Doris said. "His hasty flight proved he's plenty smart."

"This Nicholas Archer," Herb said slowly. "He interests me. From what you heard, in the dream you told Peter Hart that Archer was drawn from his subconscious memory of someone?" Doris shrugged. "The symbolism," Herb went on. "A man no one else can see. *That man* prevents what would otherwise be the success of the murder in the dream. I can't quite see what Archer symbolizes as a whole element of the dream. Peter Hart's conscience? Could be . . . Wait a minute. Something's tugging at my memory. That name Archer—in our files don't we have the information that Hart was born on an Archer Street?"

"Why yes!" Doris said.

"Hmm," Herb said. "Archer ess tee period. Ess tee period Nicholas. Saint Nicholas. And every child goes through a period of confusing the two abbreviations until he learns which is which in every case. Deep in Hart's subconscious might be an association between St. Nicholas and Archer St. that brought about the connection of the two names into Nicholas Archer."

"Marvelous, Mr. Holmes," Doris mocked, though her eyes belied the mockery. "But where does that get us?"

"We can draw three conclusions from it," Herb said. "First, Nicholas Archer is not the name of someone Hart knew, though his appearance may be that of someone he knew. Second, the symbol is related to Santa Claus. Third, it's connected to his home street. Three faint pointers that may point to nothing relevant—but interesting."

"I'm more interested in something that will point to the thing I failed to find," Doris said. "The identity of Ralph Dexter."

"Maybe St. Nick does that," Herb smiled. "And Archer street . . . Pardon me."

He reached for the ringing phone.

"IT'S Bugs Calahan," he said to Doris. "Go ahead . . . Hart checked out! . . . You followed him to the airport and he got on the plane for Cincinnati under the name Afred Blanning . . . wanting to go all the way to the west coast. Good work."

He hung up, a puzzled frown on his face.

"That's something I didn't expect," Doris said. "I thought he would return to his job and wait and see what happens."

"Maybe he will," Herb said. "Right now, though, he's running. Probably planning on starting life anew. Foolish boy. I wonder if he knows who Ralph Dexter really is? But more than that I wonder . . ." His voice drifted off.

The phone rang again. Herb just listened when he answered. When he hung up he said, "That was Nichols. Nothing in Dexter's apart-

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ment. Prints don't check with any on file. It's nice to have them though. Go home and get some rest, Doris. As soon as Hart gets settled someplace you're going to have another chance at him."

"Why?" Doris asked. "Wouldn't someone else be better?"

"No," Herb said. "You were in his dream."

"And he killed me," Doris said quickly. "I don't like it. I'd rather not go on."

"He killed Dexter first in his dream," Herb said, smiling. "In waking life he didn't." His smile changed to a grin. "I think the real trouble with you is that you don't want him followed. You want him left alone."

"Maybe you're right," Doris said, suddenly weary. "He's a bewildered man. His world has fallen around him. That's worse than death in a lot of ways, isn't it?"

Herb shrugged. "That's the chance those who turn traitor to their country have to take."

"But why did he turn traitor?" Doris asked. "What made him do it?"

"Maybe a dream," Herb said. "Maybe Nicholas Archer. That's one of the things that maybe you can find out. That's a lot of maybes, but I want as many answers as I can get."

* * *

FATHER Sprague turned his eyes from the small children with their too flat faces and sloe eyes and button noses. Two hundred yards down the dusty lane that passed for a street a man was coming toward him. A white man. Here in the center of the most poverty stricken heart of China that was enough to arouse curiosity.

The man was coming toward him purposefully. Fr. Sprague considered and discarded several possible explanations of the man being here. The neat business suit suggested he might have arrived by plane. The thin face and capable, scholarly lips, the high forehead and hair combed straight back without a part, silver in color and loose enough so that it seemed to resemble a halo in the sunlight, gave evidence of keen intelligence and alertness. And, now that he was close enough, the missionary could see that his eyes were a pale blue yet sparklingly alive.

"Hello, Father Sprague," he said, sinking onto the long bench of stone, yet remaining stiff backed and fresh. His lips flashed a smile. "I see that you don't remember me."

"No, I don't," Fr. Sprague admitted. "Your face is very familiar, but I can't place you."

"Think back," the man said gently. "I used to be in your neighborhood when you were . . ." He pursed his lips. ". . . around six or seven, I believe."

Fr. Sprague stared at him another moment. Suddenly he caught his breath sharply. He chuckled. "The strange quirks of memory,"

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he said. "When I was that age I used to imagine I could talk with God. For many years of my younger days I used to imagine he was with me all the time, and that sometimes he appeared to me and talked with me. Of course that wasn't true. But suddenly I had a strong memory that that was you. That you were the God of my childhood."

The man's eyes sparkled. His lips compressed into a repressed smile. "It would hardly do to call me God," he said. "So suppose you call me Archer."

"It must be your hair," Fr. Sprague said. "When you said to call you Archer it flashed into my mind to call you Saint Archer."

"Mr. Archer is good enough. And what's in a name?"

"Mr. Archer it is then—unless you have a first name. What are you doing so far inland and off the main routes?"

"I came to see you, principally, Father."

"Me? But why? You aren't from the Church."

"True enough. I'm from something more basic than the Church in your life. Your childhood and its dreams and realities."

"Nothing is more basic to me than the Church," Fr. Sprague said, smiling. "It's my life. These children—" But the children were gone.

"Stem from the days when you walked with God," Archer said. "And that's why I'm here. In the near future the Church is going to have competition here. Its ideology is going to be destroyed in the minds of these children. Your work is going to be lost as though it had never been."

Fr. Sprague was shaking his head. "You seem too intelligent to believe that," he said. "I've had these children since they were infants. Most of them were christened by me a few weeks after they were born. If they were taken from me tomorrow my teachings would stay with them, form a dominant part of their minds."

"Form a part, but not a dominant one. Other principles will be there, driven home by sterner teachers."

"What principles?"

"The principle that peace should exist in the world, based on universal order, and that any individual who threatens that peace threatens all mankind."

"But that is a principle inherent in the Church," Fr. Sprague said.

"The principle that so long as there are nations in arms against one another there cannot be peace, and there cannot be universal order."

"You're driving at something," Fr. Sprague said. "I'm patient. Go on."

"The principle that a child should not be crammed with false teachings, because he is too young to exercise judgment in what is true and what is false, and should therefore

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be guided by responsible adults who are careful to teach him only the truth until such time as he can exercise intelligent discrimination. And that even then it is the duty of those who know the truth to unmask lies and show their falsity to him."

"I begin to see a light," the missionary said. "What are these 'truths' you're talking about."

"They are very few in number and very simple to state. Man does not have a soul. There is no God. There must be only one universal order, and anyone who fights against the spread or the coming of that order is in effect fighting to prolong world conflict and periodic global wars, and must therefore be killed in the interests of peace. Superstitious beliefs inherited from the dark ages must be wiped out because they are nothing but superstitions, and prevent the ignorant from accepting the truth, that man is no different than the animals basically."

"Your appearance belies your words," Fr. Sprague said slyly.

"Suppose it were true," Archer said thoughtfully. "Suppose man really doesn't have a soul, and there really isn't a God."

"Only a fool would deny that man has a soul," Fr. Sprague said sharply.

"I mean a soul that continues to exist after death. Then no matter how much of that quality of personality we call soul exists in a person while alive, it would snuff out like a candle flame on death. Then wouldn't it be better, as the race reaches the maturity of civilization, to wipe out forever the hold the ancient superstitions have on the race?"

"I see now what you mean," Fr. Sprague said. "I have never seen Communism in quite that light before. I, like the rest of the free world, have wondered at the hold it gains so swiftly as it marches forward. It's the hold of unanswerable logic driven home into the minds of individuals who have had no deep religious experience to combat it."

"Soon that logic will be marching over those distant hills to come here," Archer said. "China is already estranged from the West. You will be considered a worm in the apple of logic, a threat to the unification of all China, a sower of discontent. If your hold on these children is not broken they will grow up as rebels, standing in the way of peace. As such they will be destroyed. Therefore you must be destroyed—if you stay here."

"Christians have become martyrs in every generation," Fr. Sprague said. "In death I will be as much a threat to their logic as alive."

"But you won't," Archer said quickly. "The memories of you will become memories about a deluded relic of the dark ages. Your rites will be laughed at in retrospect as the meaningless spells of a respectable witchcraft. Your sacrifice will have been in vain."

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"What would you have me do?" Fr. Sprague said heavily.

"Leave," Archer said. "Leave, and you will live to return."

"And if I choose to stay?"

"Then there will be one less who, steeped in the knowledge of the Orient and its languages and ways of thought, can return and pick up the reins once more. One less, who must be replaced by one who is clumsy and would fail."

"And if I choose to leave?" Fr. Sprague had a strange light in his eyes. "What then? Where do I go and what do I do?"

Archer shrugged. "Does it matter to you?" His expression became thoughtful. "If you had the courage to follow your star you could perhaps prevent what lies ahead . . ."

"I see," Fr. Sprague said heavily.

"Well?" A smile tugged at the corners of Archer's mouth, crinkled around his eyes, and beamed from their pale blue depths. He sat erect, his shoulders squared naturally, his silver hair combed straight back from his high forehead.

"You have misstated one thing," Fr. Sprague said slowly. "If I leave, there will be no influence here to combat the Reds when they come. If I'm killed, and die bravely, these children will remember—and they would remember if I fled, too. So I'll stay."

AS if his decision were a signal a chorus of shouts came from beyond the village. Fr. Sprague looked up the road and saw a line of squat tanks moving toward him. The symbol of Red China was painted on them.

While he watched, an American made jeep shot around the tanks and raced forward, to come to a halt with squealing brakes. A Chinese in the uniform of the Reds leaped to the ground.

"You are Father Sprague?" he said in precise English.

"Yes."

"You are under arrest. Come with me."

Fr. Sprague looked at Archer, who stood up, his lurking smile still present. The missionary frowned. Why should the Red officer ignore Archer? Was it because he knew the man, and Archer was a Red?

He looked around him. The children were back again, and some of the grownups. They stood back out of the way, their eyes large and round and flat, looking at him.

"Why am I under arrest?" he asked quietly.

"You are an enemy of the state!" the officer said loudly, in the local dialect, obviously for the benefit of those within earshot.

Fr. Sprague stood up. When he climbed into the back seat of the jeep Archer followed and sat down beside him.

The tanks had turned off the road into the village square. Soldiers were rapidly stringing barbed wire in a huge circle. The jeep raced through a gap in the barbed wire and skid-

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ded to a stop.

"Out!" the officer commanded.

Archer leaped lightly to the ground. Fr. Sprague followed more slowly. Without delay the jeep swung around and raced away.

"Why did you come along?" Fr. Sprague asked. "You didn't have to. He paid no attention to you."

"Perhaps he didn't see me," Archer said. "People in all countries see only what they want to see or expect to see." His head turned. "Ah, here come the rest of the enemies of the state. They are collecting them quickly."

The missionary surveyed the faces of the villagers being marched through the gap in the barbed wire. He knew every one. They were the most intelligent of the young people, nearly all of the old people, some of them Christians, some of them Buddhists.

"They will not waste time," Archer said. "The mass execution will take place as soon as they have everyone they want to liquidate inside the enclosure. Then they will leave a few soldiers and teachers to build the new order, and hurry on to the next village. Their goal is three villages a day."

"But you," Fr. Sprague said. "You take it so calmly. Are you one of them? Can you walk out of here?"

Archer smiled. "No, I'm not one of them. Remember? I am the God of your childhood."

The villagers were crowding around the missionary. They seemed not to see Archer.

Speaking in the local dialect, Fr. Sprague asked a woman if she saw a tall man with white hair standing beside him. He received a blank look and a headshake.

"Are you saint or devil?" he asked Archer.

"Neither," Archer said.

Loudly yipped orders were being shouted from outside the enclosure now. Red soldiers were fanning out into a semicircle, automatic rifles held at ready.

"Remarkably efficient, these Reds," Archer said. "They will have spent less than an hour on this village."

"How can you be so smug about it?" Fr. Sprague said. "Do you realize the enormity of it? There will be two hundred of these innocent people murdered in cold blood."

"In this village," Archer said. "In all China in the next few weeks it will mount up to several million. I think they are taking them on a percentage basis so that the population will be reduced one third."

"It's horrible—and you stand there with that smile on your lips."

"It depends on the beliefs of those doing it," Archer said. "Once they become convinced a man is no different in the absolute sense than a beast, it becomes no more monstrous than the raising and slaughtering quota of beef cattle in America."

"It's—it's monstrous by any standard," Fr. Sprague said. "Their

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calm haste. It's like a circus that stopped in my home town when I was in my teens. Everyone running around doing his one or two tasks, and the big tent going up, the parade forming, the show going full blast, and the whole thing picking up and going down the tracks until it was out of sight, all in one day."

"It will be like that after they leave, too," Archer said. "The new magistrate will set up the new order. People will follow it or be killed. Children will go to school and be told over and over that there is no God, man has no soul, and peace comes only from a universal order springing from the Kremlin. Those that believe and obey will survive. It's as simple as that."

"I must perform Last Rites," Fr. Sprague said.

In a loud voice he commanded those who were faithful to kneel. Immediately there was a carpet of bowed heads and bent backs around him. He raised his hand to begin.

A shrill, angry voice shouted something. There were the brittle barks of rifles.

* * *

FR. Sprague blinked his eyes. There was darkness, yet he knew that if he could clear his vision there would be light. And suddenly there was.

He was standing on a rough section of loose soil. Archer was standing a few feet away, looking at him, that intelligent, alert expression on his lean face.

"What happened?" Fr. Sprague asked. "I heard the shots. I must have been hit."

"I've been waiting a long time for you to revive," Archer said. "Come with me to the village."

"Were the others killed?"

"Yes."

Fr. Sprague walked beside Archer toward the village. From time to time he looked up at the profile of his companion, but didn't speak.

Shortly they reached the edge of the village. The missionary saw a man he recognized, and paused to greet him and ask what had developed after the Red troops departed.

The native ignored him.

"Are you afraid to talk to me?" he demanded.

When the man still ignored him he seized the man's shoulder and shook him. The native turned his face then, and abruptly leaped up, running as fast as he could.

There was a glazed look in the missionary's eyes as he turned to Archer. "He didn't look at me," he said. "He looked through me—as though I weren't there."

"Come with me," Archer said. "It's been many weeks. That should be time enough for the effects of Red teachings to be apparent."

Dazed, Fr. Sprague followed. The two men passed Red soldiers who looked straight ahead, people going about their work without seeming to see them.

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"Ah," Archer said. "Over there are some of your children. Let's go listen to them."

"But they're older," Fr. Sprague said. "Years older." He looked at Archer uncertainly, then went forward where he could watch and listen.

He watched them play, and listened to what they said. He left them and moved to other parts of the village, pausing here and there to listen, and to study the change in the people.

Superficially they seemed the same. But they weren't. He knew that, finally, when he turned away.

"You see," Archer said gently. "You should have fled when you still had time. You gave your life in vain."

"My life?" Fr. Sprague gasped, startled. "My life? But—"

He blinked in vacuous surprise. The little children were playing in the street near him. He was sitting on the bench. He looked around. Archer was gone.

"So it was a dream!" he said. His eyes grew wide. "Or a vision," he added in a whisper.

"What did you say, Father?" an eight year old boy asked in the native dialect.

"Nothing, my child."

He got to his feet and went hurriedly toward the mission, passing through the village square. He looked for the tracks of the Red tanks. The ground was packed hard from the passage of thousands of bare feet. People who, in the dream had bowed around him for the final benediction which he had not lived to administer, greeted him as he hurried past them.

An urgency possessed him. He hurried on past the mission and down a narrow lane, turning into a garden where he walked between beds of flowers to a shaded area where bamboo poles laid together formed a roof against the sun.

Impatiently Fr. Sprague underwent the politenesses. It was nearly half an hour before he could bring up the subject of his call with good taste.

"You wish to leave us?" his host asked, dismayed. "But we need you, Father. Now more than ever."

"I will be back," Fr. Sprague said. "But it is of supreme importance that I depart today. Now."

"Very well, Father." The host clapped his hands sharply. A servant appeared, bowing low . . .

* * *

"I received your letter sent from Singapore, Fr. Sprague," Cardinal Blank said, his expression one of concern, his eyes sharply penetrating. "Come in and join me at tea. We must talk this over. Surely you can't be serious about what you said in that note, written in a moment of stress."

"You invite me to have tea?" Fr. Sprague said doubtfully. "Oh, I see. But I am serious."

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"Serious or not, you will have tea with me." He took the missionary's arm and led him through the door into the small study. Both men were silent while the Cardinal prepared tea and poured it. It wasn't until they were on their second cup that he said quietly, "Tell me about it."

"I thought it a dream," Fr. Sprague said. "It was vivid and real, but when I came out of it the children were playing as they had been when I closed my eyes. An unholy compulsion possessed me to flee. I did, hating myself every step of the way. And it wasn't until I reached the British port that I learned that my village was one of the many hundreds in the path of the butchers, and that one third of my people had been murdered. Then I knew it had been a true vision, rather than a dream."

"And for that reason you should not do this mad thing. There is no call for you to quit the Church. It seems to me, rather, that you have been spared for a greater work. But tell me more of this vision."

"There was a man," Fr. Sprague said. "He called himself Archer."

"Did he have a first name?"

"Not that I remember. I seemed to know him, and yet now I have no recollection of ever having seen him before that. He seemed somehow more than a man. An angel or—"

"Or perhaps old Nick himself?" The Cardinal chuckled.

"I don't know," Fr. Sprague said slowly, missing the humor of his superior's remark. "I don't know. He defined the issues at loose in the world today better than they had ever been defined before. And since then, on the long journey to the coast, and on the boat that brought me here to California, I've done a great deal of thinking. Archer asked a question. I'd like to ask you that question." The Cardinal nodded. "If it were true that there is no God, and man has no immortal soul that survives death, would it not be the duty of all men who know that truth to wipe the world free of the superstitious beliefs inherited from the past?"

"Hmm," Cardinal Blank mused. "That is a strange question. Archer posed that? He must be old Nick. But I would say that even if such were the truth, the greater truths of ethics and spirituality are not negated, and the teachings of the Church should be carried on. This has come up before. Many times. Today I could take you to see two priests who are atheists. They wanted to leave their sworn duties, but eventually saw that it was better to lift man's eyes to a Power greater than himself for guidance, even though that Power might be a mirage.

"From my own personal experience, however, I know that man has a soul, and that God exists. I think you know that too. After all, you had a true vision."

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"I wasn't thinking of it in that ght," Fr. Sprague said. "I was rying to understand the force that as grown to such proportions that t threatens to sweep Christianity rom the earth. For the first time can see its motivations and the ogic of them. And I can see that ve are doomed to failure. Communsm isn't the true issue. It goes down leeper than that. Even here in America four out of five people are keptical about the hereafter. They uffer the Church to exist, rather han believe in its teachings. When priest in one of the iron curtain countries is killed or imprisoned, the people in the United States aren't ndignant about the affront to Truth. They are indignant about he destruction of man's right to believe anything he chooses to believe —which is something entirely different."

"So?" the Cardinal said quietly.

"So I see defeat. The new creed is that man has no soul. Having no soul he is no different than the cattle going into the slaughter chute at the Chicago stockyards. Therefore if he disagrees with the powers that be he should be killed rather than tolerated. Populations should be weeded of their element subversive to the new order. There is no answering after death. There is only life. And the path to peace is the elimination of all elements that do not submit to universal peace. It's logic. Here and there will be one who has personal experience to deny the fundamental postulate of man's animal nature, but that one will be discovered and killed."

"I hardly think it will get that serious," Cardinal Blank said calmly. "The Church will survive. In time the threat will spend itself."

"I don't think so," Fr. Sprague said slowly, setting down his empty cup. "I see a new god rising in the world. Truth. And a new creed, to destroy all but the Truth. And who can say what Truth is? We, who perform rituals that are meaningless if man has no soul?"

"The Church will survive," the Cardinal repeated. "The truth cannot be annihilated." He bent forward and tapped Fr. Sprague on the knee. "You're confused. Why don't you carry on for a year or two? Give things a chance to straighten out in your mind?"

"I left China for a reason," Fr. Sprague said. "I left because Archer showed me that martyrdom was a futile gesture in the war against anti-Christ. Now I must leave the Church for a similar reason. The weapons of the Church aren't enough."

"If they aren't enough Christ will supply our needs," Cardinal Blank said calmly.

"Through what instrument?" Fr. Sprague demanded. "No. While Christians twiddle their thumbs and wait for Christ to rescue the human race the hordes of the Godless will annihilate them. I know what I must do. If I fail I will fail, but it

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won't be because of passive smugness."

"You're wrought up over some idea. What is it?"

"I'm going to discover the human soul," Fr. Sprague said quietly. "I'm going to discover it and prove it's there, so that all the world will know beyond any doubt."

He stood up and looked down at the Cardinal, who stared at him with impassive face.

"There is only one answer to falsehood, Cardinal Blank," he said. "And that answer is *demonstrable* truth. Not the hallowed traditions of the past."

He went to the door and opened it.

"Thanks for the tea." He waited, but the Cardinal didn't answer. "Goodbye," he added, and left.

* * *

DORIS Evans leaped off the edge of the bed and answered the phone before it had finished ringing the first time. "Yes?" she said eagerly.

"Bill Nichols," the voice at the other end said. "Down at Pedro's place on the corner. We're here. Come in and go through the sister act. He doesn't suspect anything. Bye now."

She heard the click as the FBI man hung up. Her heart was beating faster as she put on her coat and hat and took a last glance in the mirror. It had been two months since she had seen Peter Hart—except for a brief glimpse she had had of him through a window for the purpose of positive identification.

That had been over a month ago. Half a dozen men had taken on the assignment of getting acquainted with Peter, who now called himself Peter Glass, without success. Bill Nichols had been the only one able to get even halfway acquainted with him, and that only in the last two days.

Five minutes later she pushed through the door into the Mexican dive, her eyes searching as she put an anxious worried look on her face. She saw Bill and Peter sitting slumped at the far end of the bar and went toward them, her heels clicking respectably.

She pretended not to see Peter. "Bill," she said in a low urgent voice. "You've got to come home. I suppose you've spent all your money again. Come on, now."

"Go 'way, Sis," Bill growled. "Lemme alone." He appeared to become aware that Pete was staring at Doris. "My sister, Doris," he said. "She's always buttin' in. Go 'way, Doris. This's my friend Pete Glass. We got important business we're discussin'. Leave us alone."

"Sure. Leave us alone," Pete growled. He turned his back to her.

She gasped in real dismay. Biting her lip, she debated what to do. She recognized there was only one thing to do. To force herself on Pete

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would be to make him all the more determined to have nothing to do with her. There was a chance . . .

"Please, Bill," she said, her voice breaking.

Bill turned his back on her and grinned at Pete. "You got the right idea, pal. We'll pretend she isn't here."

Doris turned and started toward the front, her head hanging as though she had given up in despair.

"Hey wait a minute," Pete said suddenly. "Maybe she's got something. I think I've had enough to drink for one night. I could use something to eat."

"Naw," Bill objected.

"Come on, Bill," Pete said. "Hey Doris! Wait a minute. We'll all have something to eat together."

Bill debated whether to refuse. He decided it would be safer to tag along until they got fairly solid together, and staggered erect from the bar stool.

"Oh kay," he grumbled. "I'm comin'. But a fine pal you turned out to be."

The tears in Doris's eyes were tears of relief, but she managed to make them appear from gratitude. "Thank you, Peter," she said gratefully.

They went two blocks to a cafeteria.

"Wait a minute," Bill said. "Forgot my hat. Got to go back after it."

"You didn't have a hat," Pete said.

"Sure I did," Bill said. "I always have a hat. You two go on in. Get a cup of coffee for me. I'll be right with you."

"Be sure you do, Bill," Doris said sternly.

She and Pete watched Bill walk unsteadily back toward Pedro's place. Then Doris smiled timidly up at Pete as though she didn't know whether to be afraid or not.

"Let's go in," Pete said gruffly. "I need some coffee. Black coffee, and maybe a sandwich." He took her arm and pushed open the door. "You know, I'd swear I've seen you before," he said.

"I have a funny feeling," Doris said, laughing nervously. "I feel like *this* happened before. My meeting you, I mean. Just like this, and going into the cafeteria."

THEY took trays and followed the counters around. Finally they were sitting across from each other at one of the white marble top tables. Since her remark at the door as they came in he hadn't looked directly at her. Right now he was keeping his eyes on his cup of coffee.

"I wonder what's keeping Bill?" Doris said.

"I'll go see," Pete said, starting to rise.

"No!" Doris's hand shot out and came to rest on his sleeve. "Please. Then both of you would be back there."

His eyes were on her now, wide, and with recognition. He sat down

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slowly.

"Tell me," he said. "Do you know someone by the name of Nicholas Archer?"

"N-no," Doris said.

"But of course you wouldn't," Pete said. He lowered his gaze to his coffee cup again. Doris watched him, waiting. "So you have a feeling this has happened before . . ." he said musingly. He looked up suddenly, a twisted smile on his lips. "Maybe it did. If some of the characters are missing it may work out for the better."

"You mean Bill?" Doris asked, pretending to misunderstand.

"No," Pete said. "What do you do, Doris? For a living, I mean."

"Right now I'm out of work," she said. "I'm looking for a job."

"So am I," Pete said.

"I—I have a little money," Doris said hesitantly. She was thinking of her own savings account that held several thousand dollars. She took a deep breath. "What do you plan on doing?"

"I've been a scientist," Pete said. "Surprised?" Doris shook her head. "Well, I have. Research. But that's over. I had some trouble. I'm not even going under my right name, and don't ask me what it is because I won't tell you."

"Do you believe in hunches?" Doris asked. She went on without waiting for an answer. "I have a strong hunch. I don't know what you did, or what the trouble was, but I have a strong hunch. My hunch is for you to write in a letter of resignation to your job and say that illness has forced you to take an extended leave and it's better to resign."

"Then they'd know where I am."

"Just the city. And it wouldn't make any difference. You could have any answer come to general delivery. It would clear the atmosphere, and then anything you discovered in research could come out under your name, even though you weren't living under your real name."

"Maybe you've got something," Pete said. A light of hope was dawning in his eyes.

"And we could go somewhere. I could get a job—" Doris broke off, biting her lip.

"She's right, Peter."

Pete looked around quickly. The voice had been Nicholas Archer's, but there was no one near.

"Did you hear someone?" Pete asked.

"No," Doris said. "What was it."

"I heard Nicholas Archer. He said you were right. But it must have been just my own thoughts."

"I am right," Doris said. "Believe me."

"Pardon me, but do you mind if I sit here? There's no place else . . ."

Pete looked up quickly at the question. The man standing there holding a tray beamed at him disarmingly. Pete blinked at him. For just a second it had seemed the stranger was a priest, but he wasn't.

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He was wearing an ordinary business suit.

"Quite all right," Pete mumbled. He continued to stare at the man as he carefully took the dishes from his tray and set them on the table, and suddenly he saw what had made him think the man was a priest. The face was well tanned, and so was the neck. But the tan didn't quite go down to the collar. There was a narrow band of white skin above the collar, as though the stranger had been in a sunny climate wearing the collar of a priest.

The stranger smiled at Doris. "Believe me, this is a real treat," he said. "I just arrived from China this morning. I haven't been in a cafeteria for almost seven years."

Something caught Pete's eye. He looked up. It was an empty table not far away. He let his eyes rove over the cafeteria. The place was nearly empty. There were dozens of vacant tables. He looked at the stranger again, but said nothing.

"THE war in Korea is certainly something," the stranger said, hitching up his chair and beginning to eat. "I think before long Red China will enter it. By the way, my name is Bill Sprague." He bit into a slice of bread.

"Bill Sprague?" Pete said. He looked at the stranger sharply. "Were you—" He stopped abruptly. He had been going to ask the man if he had lived in Spokane when he was little. But that would have led to remembrance, and Bill Sprague would have called him by his right name. He had to cover up. "Were you in China as a—a missionary?"

"Yes, but that's over," Sprague said. He smiled ruefully. "In fact, I just handed in my resignation to the Church. I'm going into something else."

"Oh," Pete said vaguely. He took a deep breath. "I'm Pete Glass," he plunged, "and this is Doris Evans. Her brother Bill was supposed to be along, but I guess he got tied up."

"Glad to meet you," Sprague said. He held out his hand and shook with both of them.

"What is this 'something else' you're going into," Doris asked, deciding she liked Bill's eyes.

"You'll probably laugh," he said with half humorous defensiveness.

"No we won't," Doris said.

"It wouldn't make any difference if you did. I'll tell you anyway. In China I had a chance to see the workings of Soviet thinking. I came to the conclusion that the big threat to the world isn't the idea of Communism at all, but its associated idea that man doesn't have a soul. That idea is spreading. Even in this country there are too many people who, when it comes right down to it, think that when a man dies he's all dead just like a dog or any other animal. It leads to the totalitarian strategy of killing all those who don't accept the political ideology.

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"I came to the conclusion that it's time for the human race to discover the soul," he went on. "And I decided to devote my life to trying to do that."

"How do you propose to start?" Pete asked, smiling.

"Look at this spoon," Bill Sprague said, taking it off the table and holding it up. "Inside it are pulsing hundreds of minute electrical currents, set up by all the radio broadcasting stations in the world. That can be proven by attaching a powerful radio to it and using it as an antenna. Currents so minute and subtle that they can't be measured, but they're there. Today we have all sorts of scientific devices for measuring and detecting subtle forces. And why can't they detect the soul?"

He paused and looked from Pete to Doris. "I think they could, if someone knew just what to look for. That's the angle I'm going to start with. Encephalographs and other electronic instruments." He took a bite of meat and began chewing. "It's going to take time to get started though," he said. "I'm going to have to start studying all over again. I know practically nothing about electricity. One thing in my favor is that I have a feeling that some *power* is moving me to do this, and that I will have help."

"And," Pete said slowly, "assuming you succeeded in detecting the soul, what then?"

"My goal is to detect it in a way that even the Soviet scientists can duplicate. Then Christianity will have more than platitudes to fight with. And I think that unless I or someone else succeed pretty soon, the Red flag will wave over every land, and mankind will be in for a period of slavery to dictatorship that will plunge us into centuries of dark ages once more."

The ex-Catholic priest took another bite of meat and frowned at the table top. "It may be an impossible task I've set myself to," he said, "but there's one thing that makes me think will eventually succeed. I had a vision in China that saved my life. In that vision was what I'm convinced is a spirit of a man. If that was true, then I feel sure *he will work with me from his side of the veil.*" He was silent for a moment, then added absently, almost as an afterthought, "His name was Archer."

The effect of the almost inaudible words were electric on Pete and Doris. They looked at each other, wide-eyed, then she turned and opened her mouth to say something to Sprague.

Pete kicked her shin under the table. While she winced with pain he said quite calmly, "You know, Sprague, I've been thinking about what you've said. You didn't know it, but I've been something of a scientist. I know just about all anyone knows at present about electronics. And the idea intrigues me.

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Maybe we could work together on this, huh?"

"And you can declare me in on it too," Doris said, reaching under the table and rubbing her hurt shin and pouting her lips at Pete. "I have a little money. We can find a place in the country and—" A smile flitted over her lips. "And I can cook for you scientists."

She held her breath, her eyes on Pete's face, waiting for his reaction. She could feel her heart pounding furiously under her ribs. Her FBI career was something very remote to her now, and all the future seemed poised in uncertainty in this moment.

Undramatically, as though it were no more momentous a decision than it would have been to decide to have another cup of coffee, Pete dipped his head in agreement.

* * *

IT was an ordinary laundry basket of the type found in most department stores, made of strong wicker and designed to withstand a great deal of rough handling. From its appearance it was new, as were the peach colored woolen blankets carefully tucked in over it so that they didn't hang out.

It rested on the smooth concrete surface of the porch, scarcely two feet away from the large white front door of the house. And though the porch was heavy with dew except in the regularly spaced spots that appeared to be the footprints of some large catfooted animal, there was not a drop of moisture on either the basket or the blankets.

In a tree beside the porch a pair of birds began to make half sleepy chirps as the dawn light grew stronger. And once there was a slight movement of the blankets as through a small foot underneath had kicked halfheartedly.

Aside from the strange pawlike footprints left in the dew which would be lost without a trace in another half hour, there was nothing to indicate that this was not just an ordinary case of a fond mother carefully depositing the baby she could not care for on the doorstep of someone she fondly hoped could.

Nor was there anything to indicate that this, instead of being an isolated case of baby abandonment, was a lonely scene that was repeated in unvarying essential detail on seven hundred and ninety-nine, as tabulated in the afternoon newspapers, widely distributed doorsteps throughout the nation in the early dawn light of the fourteenth day of August, nineteen sixty-nine . . .

* * *

HELEN Arbright listened to the shrilling alarmclock with growing irritation. Abruptly she sat up, throwing the blankets off in the process. "George!" she exploded. "Shut that damn thing off and get up!"

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"Mmff," he mumbled. His eyes opened sleepily and regarded his wife blankly.

"Shut that thing off!"

"Okay, okay," he mumbled, groping toward the offending mechanism without looking at it. Its noise stopped.

"Get up," Helen rasped.

"I'm getting up," he said with dignity. "If you didn't talk until the small-hours of the morning maybe I could get some sleep sometime."

A disdainful snort was her answer. She watched him cross the room, and as he reached the door she dropped back onto her pillow, pulling the covers over her with exaggerated jerks.

He looked at her from the doorway, a bitter smile on his face. "You're letting what happened affect you too much," he said. "We could always adopt a child, if you want."

She jerked upright again, glaring at him. "I'm not letting it affect me!", she said. "And maybe it wouldn't be such a good idea to have one anyway, the amount of responsibility you show around here."

"You're right," George sneered. "Getting one meal a day for me and sweeping up the floors once a week is about all you ever could handle." With that shot he slid quickly through the door and closed it, shutting off any remark she might have made, then hating himself for having said it.

With the automatism of long habit he filled the percolator and put it on the front burner, then shuffled to the back door to get the milk. He opened the door, started to bend over to pick up the lone quart that was left each morning, and paused, half bent over.

There were four quarts.

He brought them in and set them on the counter by the sink. "Helen!" he called loudly. "What the devil's the idea of four quarts of milk this morning?"

"I didn't order four quarts of milk," she shouted. "Call up the dairy and make them take three of them back!"

"Do it yourself," he growled.

Twenty minutes later, after a quick breakfast that would be supplemented later, and a quick but careful shave, he returned to the bedroom and dressed while Helen pretended to be asleep. "Well, I'm going," he growled.

She remained motionless until she heard the door close. Then she sighed deeply, wriggling comfortably down in bed. Her second relaxed sigh was interrupted as the door opened once more. George stood there, a strange expression on his face. She lifted her head and blinked at him, half puzzled, half alarmed.

"Helen, come here," he said queerly.

She didn't think to question or argue. Without taking her eyes off his face she got out of bed. When he turned and went toward the front of the house she followed him. At

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the front door he stood aside and glanced back at her, then fixed his gaze on something on the front porch.

Wonderingly she went up beside him and looked out. She saw a basket. It might have been a laundry basket. There were pastel blankets in it. As she stared at them something hidden underneath kicked upward.

Helen gasped, and in one movement was stooped beside the basket, pulling the blankets back carefully.

"A baby!" her voice exploded, half fearful, half wondering. She remained motionless a moment as though trying to grasp the fact. Suddenly she looked toward the street and seized the basket. "Help me take it inside, George," she said. But she was inside with it before he could move to help her.

He followed her into the bedroom where she set the basket on the bed. She stared at the baby, a tremulous smile appearing and disappearing on her lips.

"It's only a week or two old," George said.

"I think it's a boy," Helen said breathlessly. With abrupt frankness she turned to her husband. "George, I want to keep him."

"Hey, wait a minute," he growled softly. "We have to report him to the police."

"No!" It was an eager, frantic gasp. "No one need know. We can move somewhere and not tell anyone. Our new neighbors will take it for granted he's ours." She stared at him, trying to read his thoughts. "It's got to be that way, George," she said. "If I lose him I'll leave you. I mean it. It's him or—or nothing." She held her breath, waiting for his answer.

He stared at her, then smiled, "Good girl," he said.

For the first time in many days they went into each other's arms by common consent and kissed. It wasn't a passionate kiss, but there was perhaps more understanding in it than any they had given each other for several days.

The baby regarded the embrace with grave unblinking eyes, and after the embrace when they turned and looked down at it with their newfound intimacy it continued to regard them from the blue unwinking depths while one hand came up and stuck a thumb in the small mouth which automatically began to suck.

"I'll see a real estate agent today," George said.

* * *

"I'd like to see the editor please," the nervous little bearded man said.

"What about?" the shrewd-eyed young man asked, leaning back in his chair and looking across his desk and the varnished rail separating it and the eleven other desks from the bare floored reception area.

"I'd like to see him about that picture in the Sunday Times. The one of the bird-shaped plants."

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"Oh." The young man gave a snorting laugh. "That. Sorry. The editor has given orders he won't see anyone about that, and I'm afraid I can't help you either."

"You don't understand. I'm Dr. Fletcher, professor of botany at the university. My interest is professional."

The young man shook his head. "Sorry, Dr. Fletcher."

"But why? From the picture it seems to be some new species of plant. As a scientist I have a right to examine the evidence. I want to know where I can see them."

The young man shook his head again, regretfully. "I understand how you feel, but it can't be done. You see, that picture was taken without authorization. We have to be very careful about invasion-of-privacy suits. The newspapers are pretty much hamstrung since the Supreme Court upheld that suit against the New York paper for a million dollars two years ago in 1976. It isn't like the good old days when they had to prove libel. Now you even have to get a man's permission in writing to publish his picture . . ."

"Yes, I know," Dr. Fletcher said irritably, "but this is Science. Please let me talk to the editor."

A few moments later he was escorted along a noisy hallway into a small room crowded with desks, and across this through a varnished door set precariously into a flimsy partition. The man sitting at the cluttered desk which took up three fourths of the floor space in the cubbyhole office made Dr. Fletcher think of an ink-stained, harrassed, fourlegged spider. The door slammed, rattling the partition. The young man was gone.

"You're Dr. Fletcher of the University?" the editor said. "I remember you. Discovered a new strain of California beetle in 1971 . . ."

"That's right," Dr. Fletcher said, his beard wagging in pleased surprise. "It was in connection with my study—"

"Yes," the editor cut him off, "I know. Now, about that picture in the Sunday paper, we definitely can't do anything to help you. The setup is this: one of our reporters heard about these plants and went out to investigate. The woman slammed the door in his face. He saw the plants growing out in the garden, though, and snapped a color plate of them. He wrote the thing up and turned it in. We thought he had the permission of the owner. He didn't."

"But certainly it would do no harm to let me know the address," Dr. Fletcher said. "I wouldn't even say you had given it to me. I—I could tell the lady I had noticed them from the street, and could deny having even seen the picture."

The editor studied the slight, bearded botanist, a thoughtful light in his eyes.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," he said abruptly. "Go to a lawyer and have a notarized paper drawn up saying

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that if any lawsuit arises out of this whole thing you will bear the entire cost. If you're willing to do that I'm willing to give you the address. It could be a heavy price, you know. Frankly, I'm out on a limb. If that woman sues—and she's hopping mad about the whole thing—the paper will settle out of court without a struggle. You'll have to pay maybe thousands of dollars for *our* invasion-of-privacy."

Dr. Fletcher nodded. "I'll do that. I'm confident that once I talk to this woman she won't do anything that drastic."

* * *

ONLY the roof of the house could be seen from the street. Dr. Fletcher drove by slowly, tabulating in his professional mind the fact that the hedge that hid the property from view was about ten years old and had been trimmed recently by a fairly good amateur gardener.

He decided the people had money. The man was probably a successful business man.

When he turned around a block away and drove back past the place he noticed that the driveway had been cleverly constructed with a hedge lined jog so that a person would have to go fifteen or twenty feet up the drive to see the grounds.

His respect for the unknown landscape gardener who had laid out the grounds increased, and with it his caution. He speeded up and drove several blocks to a neighborhood market center where he parked his car and had a sandwich and coffee.

He noticed the phone booth. Gulping the last of his coffee he went into the booth and called the editor of the Times.

"I just finished driving by the place a couple of times," he said. "From what I could see they've made elaborate precautions to ensure privacy. Right now I'm in a cafe a few blocks away. I have a tentative plan."

"What's your plan?" the editor asked.

"My plan is quite simple. I want the name of the people living next door to them, and a little about them. They shouldn't be hard to meet."

"I can get you that information," the editor said.

"Good. Since I'm a professor of botany, which includes horticulture, find out if they are known to have anything special. Rhododendron hybrids or something they're proud of. I could pretend I had heard about it and wanted to see them. But my plan may not go that far. What I will do is go up this other driveway and pretend I was confused. That way I may get a chance to see these strange plants."

"Have another cup of coffee while I get the morgue to work on it," the editor said. "What's the number in that booth? I'll call you when I get what you want."

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DR. Fletcher turned boldly into the driveway this time, following the jog. The narrow road straightened at the end of the hedge row, bringing into view a half-acre of smooth lawn dotted with ornamental shrubs and dwarf trees. Two hundred feet away was the house, a one-story rambling stucco dwelling. To the right of it in the rear was a three-car garage, doors up, a solitary car nesting in its stall.

He drove slowly now, his eyes darting everywhere in search of the bed of flowers where the strange bird-like plants were shown in the picture in the Sunday Times.

Suddenly his heart leaped. He saw the spot. It was across the lawn against the far hedge that ran up the property dividing line. He resisted the impulse to stop the car and investigate them. Instead, he continued on up the drive and came to a stop where the path to the front porch met the driveway.

As he stopped, the front door opened. A woman came out, a grim look on her face. She advanced toward him down the walk.

He opened the car door quickly and got out, a broad apologetic smile on his bearded face.

"I'm afraid I must have the wrong place," he said before she could speak. "I was trying to find the Robertson place."

She relaxed visibly. "Oh, that's next door."

"Thank you," he said. "I'm Dr. Fletcher, Professor of Biology at the University. A friend of mine informed me she has one of the most complete collections of hybrid roses in the city." He put a half-timid confidential expression on his face. "What kind of woman is she? Do you think she would let me look at them?"

The last trace of suspicion evaporated from the woman's face. "Of course!" she said, laughing. "It would flatter her no end to have you look at them. They're her pride and joy."

Dr. Fletcher smiled knowingly. "You have one of the most beautifully landscaped grounds I've seen in quite some time."

"I'm sure it wouldn't interest you," the woman said quickly. "When you go out just turn left for a hundred feet and you'll come to the Robertson driveway." Her expression was so unequivocally one of dismissal that Dr. Fletcher was forced to retreat to his car.

He paused with his hand on the door and turned to thank her. His eyes were arrested by a bed of pansies against the base of the house.

They had been ordinary pansies the moment before. Of that he was certain. He would have noticed them if they had not been. But now their broad round blooms were wax white, with small red lips and seemingly sentient blue eyes that made them seem a crowd of little people, faces upturned toward him.

"Goodbye." It was the woman, her voice insistent and once again

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seeming to threaten violence.

He looked up at her and smiled. "Goodbye," he said. He opened the door and got into his car. On the widened space in front of the garage he backed around. At the front of the house he slowed down and leaned over to say goodbye to her again.

There was the movement of a curtain in one of the front windows. For an instant a face peered out at him.

It was the face of a boy whose age he judged to be about seven or eight, with round eyes and a quiet intensity of expression. The curtain dropped back in place.

"Thanks, very much," Dr. Fletcher called.

He settled behind the wheel and drove back along the driveway at a pace that could be considered neither too hasty nor too slow.

In the rear view mirror he could see the woman still standing there watching him leave, until the hedge blotted her from view.

* * *

Mrs. Robertson, Dr. Fletcher quickly discovered, had the same attitude toward roses that she had toward drinking.

"Get an expert," she said whenever she thought of it. "Get an expert. Then let him do his stuff."

The first expert Dr. Fletcher met was her private bartender. After sampling the frozen daquiri the quiet mannered expert served him, he decided the man was indeed an expert.

"Like I told you," Mrs. Robertson said, "get an expert. You say you're an expert on plants?" She blinked with owlish hospitality. "Who sent you? Oh yes. You told me. George Prentiss. Never heard of him. Must be a friend of my husband. Anyway, you're an expert, so you know what I'm talking about. Harvey, make Dr. Fletcher another frozen daquiri. He likes them. I can tell."

"No thanks," Dr. Fletcher said hastily. "One's enough, I want to be able to appreciate your roses, Mrs. Robertson."

"Oh yes, the roses," she said. "My gardener can show them to you. He knows all about them. He's an expert. But have another daquiri anyway."

"Maybe I will," Dr. Fletcher said with sudden expansiveness. "You know, I had a little trouble finding your place. Went next door first."

"Oh you mean the Arbrights? Nice people. They never bother us." Mrs. Robertson accepted another glass of the bright green fluid the white coated expert on drinks kept coming to her, without seeming to notice the change of an empty glass for a full one. "I like neighbors who mind their own business. How'd she treat you?"

"To tell you the truth," Dr. Fletcher said cautiously, "she seemed rather anxious for me to leave. And in a way I hated to. She seems to have some rather unusual plants

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herself. A variety of pansy I didn't recognize . . ." This drew a blank expression. He tried again. "Some plants on the far side of the lawn that I'd swear I'd never seen before. Most peculiar shape. More like small birds sitting on short stems . . ."

Mrs. Robertson burst into loud laughter, spilling some of her drink and avoiding the falling drops with expertness born of years of practice.

"*Those* have the wits scared out of her," she said knowingly. "It's all the fault of her brother Steve. Their cook told our cook about it. She won't let poor Steve on the place any more because of that little incident, though it really seems unjust to me, because if it weren't for him they'd still have to mow the lawn twice a week the same as the rest of us."

"The lawn?" Dr. Fletcher said weakly.

"Yes. They never have to mow it. Harvey, hurry up with Dr. Fletcher's daquiri. Her brother Steve is always playing sly tricks like that on Arthur. He's their boy, you know."

"No, I didn't," Dr. Fletcher murmured, accepting the second daquiri and leaning forward in his chair. "I believe I noticed the boy looking out the window at me as I drove away . . ."

"He's a shy one," Mrs Robertson winked jovially. "And utterly gullible. Believes anything he's told. Stevey told him to plant the birdseed and he did." She went into another gale of laughter. "Only," she gasped, "the joke was on poor Steve. The seed is growing into birds. Almost any day now I expect them to hop off their perches and start flying around."

"Bird seed?" Dr. Fletcher asked, beginning to suspect his leg might be being pulled. "Where did it come from?"

"Here," Mrs. Robertson said. She got up abruptly and went to the far side of the room and pulled open a drawer. She came back with a small carton of a standard brand of birdseed that could be bought in any pet store. "I gave Arthur some one day when he was over here."

"He comes over here?" Dr. Fletcher said. "Often?"

"Occasionally," she said carelessly, shrugging.

"Let's take a look at the roses," Dr. Fletcher said. "If you don't object, I would like to spend considerable time studying them, if I may."

"THIS is Dr. Fletcher, Theodore," Mrs. Robertson said airily when they found the gardener on his knees in an obscure flower bed. "He's from the University. He's going to study my roses. I must hurry back in the house now, doctor. An appointment with my dentist . . ."

She smiled and hurried away.

The gardener looked after her, then darted a grin at Dr. Fletcher. "What do you want to see first?"

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Dr. Fletcher returned the grin. "It's hard to say. I'm professor of botany at the university."

"Oh! I think I've heard of you. You discovered that new California beetle."

"Yes. What should I call you? Ted? My name's Joe. Someone mentioned that you were the best rose man in town, and I thought you might have developed some new strains . . ." Dr. Fletcher looked at the gardener with apparent carelessness and sensed that his guess was going to pay off.

Ted flushed under his tan and became overly modest. "I do have a couple," he said hesitantly, "but of course every rose fancier develops a couple of private strains, in time. Mrs. Robertson sold one of them to a big rose grower. It'll be on the market next year. The *Henrietta Robertson Golden* strain. It has white streaks running through the petals. I'll show you some, though the blooms aren't too plentiful right now."

He turned and led the way along the winding path. Dr. Fletcher followed him, his eyes darting to either side of the path, searching for the unusual.

But it was almost an hour later that he saw the small black buds hidden behind some thick shrubs. He caught his breath, but said nothing. They were tea roses the shade of darkest night, perfectly formed, and—impossible.

At that moment Ted pointed out a bed of a conventional variety of tree rose. He followed his guide and pretended interest and admiration.

But finally he threw caution to the winds. "Look here, Ted," he said in a mildly chiding tone. "You're holding out on me. Why? Are you afraid I would steal it? The *Black Tea Rose*, I mean . . ."

Ted paled visibly. His voice was sharp. "How did you know about that?"

"I didn't," Dr. Fletcher said disarmingly. "I saw them back there, and was waiting for you to mention them."

"I wasn't going to," Ted said. "And nobody knows about them. I don't intend for anybody to learn about them, either."

"Why not?"

Ted hesitated. "They aren't a natural rose. You know what I mean, I think. You watch plants for sports. When they appear you take cuttings and develop the sport. These didn't happen that way."

Dr. Fletcher remained silent, sensing that that was the best way to draw the man out.

"This was just an ordinary red variety of tea rose. Then all of a sudden the blooms started coming in black. When I take cuttings they revert. There's only the one plant and there never will be any other. That's why I'm keeping it to myself."

"It *just happened?*" Dr. Fletcher asked.

"Yes," Ted said uncomfortably,

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looking away.

"I wonder . . ." Dr. Fletcher said slowly. "Nothing ever *just happens.*" He studied the gardener from under lowered eyelids, trying to decide how far he dared go. On impulse he decided to go all the way. "Could it be," he said slowly, "That you mentioned to Arthur that you would like to have a black tea rose? And that soon after that this particular plant started producing black blooms?"

Before the gardener could answer there was a rustling in the shrubbery nearby. Both men turned.

The boy who stepped out was the same as the one who had looked at Dr. Fletcher through the window of the house next door. His mouth was working, whether from fear or anger Dr. Fletcher couldn't decide.

"Don't tell him, Theodore," the boy said.

"I guess there's no need to now," the gardener said resignedly. "Why didn't you keep out of sight?"

"He's too interested in me!" Arthur said heatedly. "He was over at my house and saw me through the window. He's just been pretending he was interested in your roses."

"Is that true, Dr. Fletcher?" Ted asked, doubling his fists and taking a step forward, a humorless grin making his face a fighting mask.

"No!" Dr. Fletcher said, retreating instinctively. Then he stopped. "Yes it is, in a way," he said. He turned to Arthur and spoke rapidly. "It wasn't, at first. At first I was merely interested in those plants that look like birds—"

"They *are* birds," Arthur said.

"Then I saw the pansies that looked like faces of little people—"

"They *are* little people," Arthur said defiantly. "They just pretend to be pansies so people won't bother them."

"Then when I saw the black tea roses I knew you made them turn black," Dr. Fletcher said.

"I didn't," Arthur said. "Theodore wanted them to be black, and so when I told them to be black they did as I told them."

"That's what I mean," Dr. Fletcher said. "Do you understand why I'm interested in you, Arthur? How could I help being." He cast about in his mind desperately for something to change the hostile expression on the boy's face. "You see," he said, smiling suddenly, "I—I'm so little for a grown man, and I've always wanted to be as big as other men, and I thought maybe you could make me grow . . ."

It had been a stroke of inspiration. He really wanted to be big, and now that he thought of it, it was the one thing Arthur could do for him that he would really want.

The gardener stared at him in surprise, then turned to Arthur. "Could you do that?" he asked doubtfully.

"I—could try!" Arthur said. His defiance and suspicion were gone. Dr. Fletcher had struck the one

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chord in his makeup that was needed. A realization that someone wanted him to help him.

* * *

GEORGE Ashbrook, Dean of Psychology, glanced up casually from the book he was reading, looked down, frowned suddenly, and looked up again, his hands going to his glasses exploratively as though they might be the cause of the trouble.

Dr. Fletcher closed the door and came on into the room.

"Good heavens, Joe, what's happened to you?" Ashbrook asked explosively. "Your clothes . . ."

"No, they haven't shrunk," the diminutive professor of botany said, smirking behind his beard. "I've grown. An inch and three quarters in ten days, to be exact. Been eating like a horse, too."

"What is it?" Ashbrook asked, a gleam of interest in his eyes. "Some new plant hormone?"

"That's what I've come to see you about," Dr. Fletcher said. He hooked one leg over the edge of the desk and sat down. He sketched briefly all the salient facts while Ashbrook listened. He concluded with, "What do you think, George?"

"I don't know," Ashbrook said. "Of course there's been unconfirmed and unconfirmable tales about such things. Burbank, for example, is reputed to have created a variety of spineless cactus by talking to it. I have a book in my library which tries to prove that crystalization of organic salts can be influenced by the mind. Everything you've told me I'd be inclined to discount. But your growing . . .! It's unbelieveable. Are you sure your clothes haven't shrunk? No, that's far fetched. Your shirt wouldn't shrink the same as your suit . . ."

Dr. Fletcher said nothing.

"Mind over matter has been pretty much discounted," Ashbrook said, struggling visibly with the evidence in his mind. "In fact, there's no standard term designating it. It's possible . . . Hmm . . ."

He closed his book with a thump of finality and stood up.

"I've thought of the possibility of a sort of self-hypnosis," Dr. Fletcher said.

"That's possible, of course," Ashbrook said. "Still, how old are you Joe? Thirty-five? I would say it's impossible for you to start growing again under any circumstances. Suppose you take me out to see this boy. I'd like to get at the root of the matter. It has me bothered." He looked at Dr. Fletcher. "All these years I've known you, and suddenly you start to grow." He shook his head sadly.

"I don't know whether you should," Dr. Fletcher said. "The boy is quite shy, and for some reason his mother is distinctly hostile toward strangers."

"What's the boy's name?" Ashbrook said.

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"Arthur. Arthur Arbright."

"Well, let me know how things develop, Joe," Ashbrook said. He glanced at his watch. "I have a class in ten minutes."

He watched Dr. Fletcher leave the room, then sat down and pulled the phone toward him. His first call was to get a substitute teacher to take over his class. After that he called several numbers, getting a bit of information from each.

George Arbright had married Helen Minter nine years ago. It was the second marriage for both of them. Neither had any children. One year after their marriage Mrs. Arbright had been in an automobile accident that hospitalized her for two months. The physician in charge had been a Dr. Kane who gave out the information that she couldn't have children. That checked with the birth records which gave no record of a child for the Arbrights.

A call to a lawyer friend brought a hurry-up check of court records which showed no record of the Arbrights adopting a child. Several more calls brought out the fact that no Arthur Arbright was registered at any of the public schools.

Ashbrook drummed his desk thoughtfully, then looked up a number in the phone book and dialed it.

"Hello, Fred," he said. "This is George Ashbrook. I'd like you to have lunch with me . . . Yes, I have something on my mind . . .Okay, in half an hour across the street from your court."

* * *

"What is it?" Judge Freemont asked with a smile as the waitress left their table, "Surely none of the child delinquents on the docket today interest you."

"No," Ashbrook said. "You work closely with the juvenile officers don't you?"

"Yes."

"I have something I want done," Ashbrook said. "It must be done with the utmost tact. And I don't want anything made of it."

"Let me know what you want," the judge said, "and I'll let you know if it can be done. If not, I won't have heard a thing you have said."

"I have something very unusual I'm investigating," Ashbrook said. "A child who is living with a couple in a good home. He isn't registered in any of the public schools. He apparently isn't adopted by this couple, and he apparently isn't their child. What I'd like is for a truant officer to call at the home and say he is investigating reports that this child isn't attending school. I want to know exactly what the woman tells him, and I don't want anything done about it further, no matter what develops."

Judge Freemont frowned. "It could be done, I guess," he said. "I could have Harry Moore do it. He's tactful enough, and will do as he's

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told." He studied the psychologist for a moment. "I don't suppose you'd care to tell me what it's about, would you?"

"N-no," Ashbrook said. "I'll tell you this much. The boy has some rather startling talents. That's why he interests me."

"All right," the judge said, making a decision, "Give me the data and I'll tell Moore what to do."

It was four in the afternoon when Ashbrook was called to the phone on it. "This is Harry Moore," a heavy voice identified the speaker. "Judge Freemont told me to call you direct and tell you what happened."

"Good," Ashbrook said. "What did you find out?"

"They denied anyone by that name lived there."

"Did you have the right place?" Ashbrook said, startled.

"The woman admitted her name was Arbright. She was most curious as to who had turned her in to the juvenile court. But she was also most insistent that no boy by the name of Arthur or any other name lived there. She stood on the porch and watched me all the way down the driveway, too." There was a moment of silence. Then, "Do you want me to watch the place and pick the kid up if I can?"

"No," was Ashbrook's hasty reply. "Drop the whole matter. And thanks." He let the receiver fall back slowly, a puzzled light in his eyes. This changed to uneasiness. He was afraid he had bungled things. Fletcher wouldn't like it if that foolish move of sending a truant officer there made them send the child away.

The uneasiness changed to half angry determination to get to the bottom of the thing.

A half hour later he turned his car into the driveway of the Arbright place. His lips were compressed stubbornly. Stopping the car at the side of the house he went to the front door and rang.

"Mrs. Arbright?" he asked curtly of the woman who answered. She dipped her head once and glared at him uneasily. "I'm Dr. George Ashbrook," he went on bluntly. "You have a boy named Arthur Arbright. He's not your son. You haven't adopted him. You don't have him in school. When a truant officer calls to find out why, you deny he lives here. I want to know why."

"By what authority——" Mrs. Arbright began. Then she wilted. Taking out a handkerchief she started twisting it to shreds, her lips working as though trying not to give way to crying. "I suppose it will have to come out someday," she said, suddenly tired. "He was left on our doorstep eight years ago, just two weeks after I came home from the hospital. My husband said if we reported it he would be taken away from us, and, well, I had been told in the hospital that I could never have children . . ." She began

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to cry softly.

"Do you remember the date the child was left?" Ashbrook asked.

"Will I ever forget it?" Mrs. Arbright said, smiling against her will through her tears. "We use it as his birthdate. It was August fourteenth, nineteen sixty-nine." She began to cry again. After a moment she moaned, "What will happen now? I suppose they'll take him away from us."

* * *

FLETCHER, Judge Freemont, and Ashbrook were relaxed in Ashbrook's apartment ignoring the television.

"I assured her Arthur wouldn't be taken away from her if I could help it," Ashbrook concluded. "Poor woman. I guess all these years she's been living with the constant dread that something would happen to take him away."

"August fourteenth nineteen sixty-nine," Judge Freemont said thoughtfully. "That date sounds familiar somehow. Of course it's nearly eight years ago. Pretty hard to remember something that old. I was in the District Attorney's office then . . ."

"I was conducting field research in Colorado that August," Fletcher said. "Living in a tent and moving about quite a bit. I can still remember it. About the middle of August I was not far from Pueblo. I went into town to get some supplies and everybody was talking—" He sat up abruptly, excited. "There had been a wave of babies being left on doorsteps!"

"That's it," Freemont said. "Over seven hundred babies were found on doorsteps that morning. *Reported*, that is. Evidently Arthur Arbright was unreported. Most of them were turned over and eventually placed for adoption."

"But what does that have to do with it?" Ashbrook asked. "Quite obviously it was coincidence, and none of the cases were connected."

"That's what everybody said," Freemont said.

"What else could it be?" Ashbrook persisted. "Surely the cases couldn't be connected!"

"What—" Fletcher said. He cleared his voice and started over. "What if all those babies had the same powers as Arthur?"

Judge Freemont looked at him sharply. "Nonsense!"

"Maybe it isn't nonsense," Ashbrook said slowly. "How many women like Mrs. Arbright didn't report the baby left on their doorstep? Was she singled out by chance? Or did someone read about her accident in the papers and pick her because she had just learned she couldn't have children?"

"But," Freemont protested, "where would they come from?"

"That's the point," Ashbrook said. "Where would they come from? Well over seven hundred babies all the same age left on widely scattered doorsteps on the same morn-

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ing, and all possessing mental powers not possessed by ordinary children."

"That could be checked on the known cases," Freemont said. "We could look up those children and go see a few of them and find out."

"That would establish if they were all supernormal," Ashbrook said, "but wouldn't answer the question of where they came from. *They* wouldn't remember!"

"That's true," Fletcher said, "but if they were supernormal they might have physical characteristics distinguishing them from us. It might even be possible to establish whether they were terrestial in origin or not."

"You're getting too far-fetched," the judge said with a laugh. "Suppose we keep it down to earth. Tomorrow morning I'll start things going. In a few days I can have reports on a few of those babies and what became of them. If they're all supernormal, as George calls it, we can get a few of them into a clinic and the doctors can give them a going over. We can go on from there."

* * *

ASHBROOK glanced at the house in front of which he was parked.

"We didn't have much luck here in town," Judge Freemont had said. "Of the four August-the-fourteenth babies reported, three of them moved away and can't be located. The fourth, a girl named Joan Condon, by her adopted parents, lives at 904 Twelfth Street. You can go see her. I've called and told them you're coming. I didn't tell them why, except to say it was a checkup on her welfare."

The house, Ashbrook noted, was a well kept up low-priced home. There was a steel mesh fence enclosing the yard, and a pair of roller skates lay abandoned on the front walk not far from the front steps.

He got out of the car and pushed open the gate, closed it carefully behind him, and went up to the front door, noticing that the skates were adjusted for small feet.

Mrs. Condon was a cheerful woman. Her generous mouth had a habit of flashing into a smile. But her eyes were worried and sharp behind her appearance of cheerful welcome.

"I'm Dr. Ashbrook," he introduced himself. "I think you've been expecting me."

"Oh yes," Mrs. Condon said. "Won't you come in?" She stepped back and held the door open. "Joan is out in back. I'll call her. She—she knows she's adopted, so it's all right. I told her you were calling to make sure she was happy with us, and for her to tell you nothing but the truth."

She hurried away. Ashbrook looked around. He was in a typical living room, with little feminine touches here and there, and family

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pictures propped on things. Most of the pictures were of a little girl, with ages ranging from babyhood to the age of eight. These latter were of a serious little girl with large soft eyes. There was no slightest indication that she might be other than perfectly normal in every respect. Perhaps she looked a little too serious for her age, Ashbrook decided. Or maybe having her picture taken frightened her.

He turned as the door opened and Mrs. Condon came in, preceded by Joan. While Ashbrook went through the words and motions of introduction and placing the girl at ease he studied her appearance. Her hair was a rich brown with natural-appearing waves, cut short enough to be neat with casual combing. Her mouth was medium, with well-formed lips. Her teeth as she smiled in a half frightened way were gleaming white and regular.

He concentrated on her eyes briefly. There was no sign of abnormality in their structure. They were blue.

He looked from her to Mrs. Condon and back again. The two seemed very much alike. Anyone would have taken the girl for the daughter of the woman.

"This is just a first meeting, Joan," Ashbrook said. "I want you to learn that you have nothing to fear from me in any way. Are you happy here?"

"Oh yes!" Joan said. "I love Mommy very much. She never spanks me, and she's always understanding."

"I'm sure she is," Ashbrook said. "What grade are you in in school?"

"I'm in the third grade. I like English best of all. I get a great deal of fascination out of the meanings of words."

"Why?" Ashbrook asked.

"Because it seems so wonderful that they have meanings. They're like living things. Animals and flowers. You see them and they seem strange and disinterested. But when you get acquainted with them so you can understand them they're like friends."

"I see," Ashbrook said thoughtfully. "You use some words that most little girls in the third grade don't know yet."

"That's because I study words all the time. I have a dictionary." Her smile flashed briefly.

"Do you have any pets?"

"I have a pet robin," Joan said.

"And it's the most unusual thing," Mrs. Condon broke in proudly. "Each spring when the birds are coming back Joan's robin appears and flutters against her window until she lets it in. And when she's out in the yard it follows her around, landing on her shoulder quite often when she stands still."

"How did you get the robin for a pet?" Ashbrook asked.

"That's a strange thing too," Mrs. Condon said. "A cat had caught it. When Joan brought it in it looked like it was half eaten. Of course it

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hadn't been hurt hardly at all, because when she washed it and got all the blood off it was as good as new."

"What happened to the cat?" Ashbrook asked, grinning.

"That was the saddest thing," Mrs. Condon said. "It belonged to the lady two doors away from us. It seemed like there was fifty dogs took after it. I saw it. They climbed over the fence some way. They tore the cat to pieces. And to this day they can't keep a cat anywhere in this neighborhood. They get them, and something happens to them. For one thing, there always seems to be a lot of dogs passing through."

"I told the dogs to keep the cats away," Joan said with quiet firmness.

"Joan!" Mrs. Condon said reproachfully.

"But I did," Joan said. "You told me to tell Dr. Ashbrook the truth, and I did tell the dogs to drive all the cats away."

Mrs. Condon gave him a look that implied mutual adult understanding. "Children imagine things," she said gently.

"Yes, I know," Ashbrook said, matching her tone. But unnoticed by the woman he winked at Joan. The protest rising to her lips died away. A twinkle crept into her eyes.

* * *

JUDGE Freemont frowned into the depths of his cocktail glass. "It's been two weeks," he said. "I haven't had any luck in locating the other August-the-fourteenth babies. It seems the average family moves every few years and neglects to leave a forwarding address."

"Or maybe," Dr. Fletcher said, "there's some design to it. Something making those people get lost just in case someone like us stumbles onto the secret of the babies."

Freemont shook his head. "Don't read too much into coincidence."

Ashbrook's voice came from the kitchen where he was making sandwiches. "Why don't you contact Social Security? That would be the place to find out where those people all are now."

"They wouldn't be allowed to release that information without a Presidential order," Freemont said. "And anyhow, I've been thinking. You have Arthur and Joan. You probably couldn't learn any more if you had all of them. Why not just concentrate on the two?"

Ashbrook appeared in the kitchen doorway. "You seem to forget," he said. "These babies aren't human. Why are they here? Who put them here? What are they going to do when they grow up? What will be their powers when they are developed fully? Right now they fool around with restoring half chewed up robins to life and changing red roses to black roses to please their friends. In a few years they will discover the full extent of their powers."

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"I know," Judge Freemont said patiently, "but to my way of thinking you can do more with just two than you could with all of them."

"Maybe he has s o m e t h i n g, George," Fletcher said thoughtfully. "For one thing, with two of them on our side, and with us developing them intelligently, they can be more powerful than all the others put together, and can control the others if they ever try anything individually."

"I had that in mind," Freemont said. "Another thing I had in mind was that maybe these babies are watched from time to time by whoever or whatever left them."

"That could very well be," Ashbrook said. "That makes me think of something. Why, out of all of them, were just two living where they were left? Could it be that whatever left them wanted these two to be discovered and studied?"

"That's too far-fetched," Freemont said. "And damn it, I think sometimes that it's too far-fetched to assume that something alien left those babies here. There're too many of them for it to be coincidence, not to mention the fact that they're all supernormal. But suppose some ship in the navy was too close to some atomic experiment, and all the sailors were changed in some way—"

"And they all got shore leave and their girlfriends all left the babies on doorsteps?" Ashbrook said, grinning.

"It sounds absurd, I know," Freemont said, "but no more so than the theory that some alien race landed secretly on Earth and manufactured several hundred of their babies in an incubator or something and left them on as many doorsteps, to grow up and by their superior powers take over the Earth."

"No. That's the only reasonable hypothesis," Ashbrook said gravely. "And it will probably happen in spite of anything we might try to do. Will there be any upper limit to their powers? Take Arthur, for instance. He planted ordinary birdseed, and his belief that they would grow into birds made it happen. Not flesh and blood birds, to be sure, but as close an approach to the real thing as vegetable matter could come. Think what that mental power will be like when he grasps it fully and develops it under conscious control? And sooner or later those August-the-fourteenth babies are going to seek one another out and organize, and decide what to do with their powers."

"Which brings up something," Freemont said. "When are you going to bring Arthur and Joan together?"

"We aren't," Ashbrook said grimly.

"But why not?" Judge Freemont asked protestingly.

Ashbrook turned his eyes to Fletcher, now a bearded six-foot giant lounging lazily on the davenport. "Look at Fletcher," he said. "When *I* look at him, the way he's grown almost a full foot in a few weeks, I think of the first experi-

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ments with Plutonium when they were just finding out that its rate of fission could be affected by heavy water. Unspectacular, but out of that came the Hydrogen bomb that razed two hundred square miles of Siberia in 1954 in a single instant."

"Surely you don't think—" Judge Freemont began.

"I don't know what to think," Ashbrook said. "All I know is that those kids can *control* matter. They don't influence it. They control it. I keep thinking that if Fletcher had said what he wanted most was to fly, Arthur would have grown wings on him instead of increasing his size." He smiled at the startled expression on Fletcher's face.

* * *

"WE'VE located another of the babies," Judge Freemont said a week later on the phone.

"Where is it?" Ashbrook asked.

"Right here in town. The child's name is Lin Baker. The Bakers live at four oh three Seventeenth Street."

"I don't have any more classes today," Ashbrook said. "I think I'll take a run over there and get acquainted."

He hung up and hurried from the building to his car. Half an hour later he pulled up in front of the house at four oh three Seventeenth. It was, he saw, badly in need of repairs.

The concrete walk was cracked and broken. From behind the rusted screen door came the sounds of a radio program and the odor of cooking cabbage.

He knocked. A moment later a woman appeared, wiping her hands on an apron that should have been discarded long ago. "Yes?" she said disinterestedly, making no move to unlock the screen.

"I'm Dr. Ashbrook from the university," he introduced himself. "I think Judge Freemont advised you I was coming to see your adopted son."

"Oh. Sure," she said, unlocking the screen and pushing it open. "Come on in. He's in his room. Doesn't feel well today."

"That's too bad," Ashbrook said sympathetically, glancing with concealed distaste at the unkempt room.

Suddenly when he was half way across the room a strange tingling sensation swept through him. He paused, then continued on after Mrs. Baker, struggling to dismiss the feeling that some power was probing him, feeling out his strength.

"Here's his room," Mrs. Baker said twisting the knob and pushing the door open. "Lin. Here's a man to see you."

Ashbrook was acutely conscious of the two black coals of eyes staring at him from the pinched white face of the boy propped up in bed. A flood of probing questioning thoughts pushed into his mind. Telepathy? He asked himself the question and dismissed it. He had spent too many hours trying to find

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that faculty without success to admit its possibility now.

"He's always been very sickly," Mrs. Baker was saying. "We had him in school for a few months, then he hurt his leg and it didn't heal right . . ." Her voice drifted into discouraged hopelessness.

"Hello, Lin," Ashbrook said.

"Hello," the boy said. "Leave us alone, mother."

"All right," Mrs. Baker said. She turned and left the room obediently.

"You know I'm not—" Lin paused, then said, *"human,"* in a tone that implied he considered the human race as he had found it something less than himself, and disappointing.

"What gave you that idea?" Ashbrook said smoothly. "Of course you're human. But I think I know what you mean."

"Yes," Lin said. "You do. You also know of others like me. And you're afraid of my powers. Maybe you have reason to be. I don't know. I haven't turned against anybody *yet.*"

"Except yourself," Ashbrook said quietly. He saw the black eyes grow startled and went on. "Not that I blame you. You're instinctively a lover of beauty. You found yourself caught in a web of circumstance so that there seemed no way out. School was distasteful so you made your leg become deformed so you wouldn't have to attend. Instead of attacking those who made fun of you you attacked yourself each time something had to be done."

"That isn't true," Lin said, his voice barely audible.

"Oh, but it is," Ashbrook said calmly. "But all that's over now. Unless you object strenuously a new life is going to begin for you. You see, I'm as interested as you are in finding out who, and *what,* you are."

"What I am?" Lin asked. And from his tone Ashbrook knew that the question had never occurred to Lin before in such a blunt manner.

* * *

"YOU see what I mean?" Ashbrook said nervously the next evening to Judge Freemont. "I'm almost afraid to open my mouth in front of those three kids. Almost anything I say might give them an idea that wouldn't occur to them otherwise. Dangerous ideas. It may be that raising the question to Lin of what he is will lead to developments far more dangerous than the atom bomb ever could be. Ideas are dangerous. They lifted man from savagery to the machine age. The hydrogen bomb can destroy hundreds of square miles in a fraction of a second, but an idea in the head of one man can transform the surface of the earth."

"You're letting it get you," Freemont said gravely. "You forget that there are such things as compensating ideas, and good influence. Only in the insane do ideas become ob-

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sessions."

"And you forget that these kids work by direct thought," Ashbrook said. "They think something or believe something and it comes true."

"How?" Judge Freemont asked. "That's what's been puzzling me. Of course I know about miracle healings and that sort of thing, but I gather that this isn't like that. For example, you keep mentioning the Hydrogen bomb. It gives me the impression that one of these children could, by nothing more than thinking it, cause a chunk of ordinary matter to explode like an atom bomb. No no. Let me finish," he said hastily as Ashbrook opened his mouth. "As I understand it, the atom bomb explodes because of some property of U_{235} that ordinary matter doesn't have. That goes to the core of the thing. How could a mere mind reach directly into the atomic and molecular structure of a thing and alter it, alter even its inherent properties and functions?"

"I don't know," Ashbrook said. "I could tell you of several theories that would explain it, starting with the one that all reality is just thoughts in the mind of the Supreme Being. I could even go into the works of *Dix* and *Cartwright* on the alteration of the rest-mass of the electron, the change of the velocity of light. Did you know that the most recent experiments measuring the velocity of light show it to have changed fifty miles per second in the last ten years? And the rotation of the earth on its axis shows variations that can't be accounted for."

"I don't see what that has to do with it," Freemont said slowly.

"Dix brings up the experiments in which subjects were able to upset the laws of probability by willing them to be upset. The throw of a pair of dice for example. He advances the theory that the mind isn't just a passive receptacle of external sensation, but is able to affect matter because just as the mind is to a certain extent material in structure, so also matter is to a certain extent mental in basic structure."

"I still don't . . ." Freemont protested faintly.

"One stick of dynamite can't blow up a mountain," Ashbrook said, "or even a whole box of the stuff, but an atom bomb the same size can do it. Your mind or my mind can't change the course of a single molecule of a substance, but if there's a functional connection between mind and external matter the right kind of a mind could act directly to—"

Freemont chuckled. "Isn't that getting close to the universe being thoughts in the mind of God?"

"No it isn't," Ashbrook said. "It's getting down to something fundamental. A common basis for physical law and psychological law. Mathematics and logic have alreay come to that."

Freemont frowned in concentra-

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tion. After a moment he said, "Maybe there's some field, some force, that science hasn't discovered yet that the minds of these children are equipped to tap and control."

"I doubt it," Ashbrook said skeptically. "That smacks of the old phlogiston theories that were exploded one by one. We aren't up against an unknown type of energy that can alter matter. We're up against something more basic than energy that can alter the behavior of matter. Something that can change the laws of the universe by an act of will just as the city can change its traffic laws."

"All right," Freemont said. "Let's assume that's so. There's still the basic fact that these children can be influenced so their changes are beneficial rather than harmful."

"And there's still the basic fact that we don't know why they're here, or what brought them here," Ashbrook said darkly. "If I could only figure out a good reason why . . . " He relapsed into brooding silence.

The silence was interrupted by the ringing of the phone. Ashbrook got up and went over to the paper-piled desk to answer it.

"Hello," he said. A moment later he said, "What!" rather sharply, jiggled the receiver, then dropped the phone. "Come on!" he said desperately to Freemont. "That was Fletcher. Something's wrong with him."

"HE called from the Robertson place," he explained as he shot the car well over the speed limit. "I got that much out of him before he collapsed."

He took a corner with screaming tires while Judge Freemont hmm'd and appeared not to notice. When he finally turned into the street where Arthur lived they saw a brightly lighted driveway ahead, with a woman standing on the sidewalk.

When they slowed down she waved at them and came to the car. "I'm Mrs. Robertson," she said. "Let me get in and I'll show you where to go."

Under her direction Ashbrook went past the Robertson house to the garage, then headed across the lawn, circling some shrubbery and coming suddenly to a small cottage.

"This is the place," Mrs. Robertson said. "It's Ted's cottage. He's my gardener. Dr. Fletcher phoned you from here while Ted ran to the house to get me. I called the family doctor too. He'll be here in a few minutes."

She pushed open the front door of the cottage and stood aside, waiting for them to enter.

Ashbrook looked at Judge Freemont, then went in. He stopped so abruptly that Freemont bumped into him, then froze into immobility himself as his eyes came to rest on Fletcher.

Fletcher appeared to be unconscious. The right half of his face

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was in repose. The left half was contorted into a grotesque mask. The right arm was twisted to such a peculiar angle that it seemed to be broken. The left leg was doubled up against the stomach. He was lying on his back.

"God!" Ashbrook said hoarsely.

Judge Freemont pushed him gently aside and went on into the room, his eyes sharp and alert. When Ashbrook started to follow him he held out his arm and said sharply. "Don't come any farther. Not until we know more about what's happened." He went slowly to Fletcher and stooped over, looking intently at his scalp. Then he looked up at Mrs. Robertson. "What happened? Was there a shot? A fight?"

"Ted can tell you when he gets here," she said. "I think he went out to the street when he saw us come. He'll stay there until the doctor comes."

"Is he shot?" Ashbrook asked tensely.

"I don't know," the judge said. "His position indicates a brain injury."

"Oh," Ashbrook said. "You're right, or maybe it isn't a brain injury at that. Maybe his growing so fast resulted in some final break. A blood clot on the brain."

A car door slammed. The gardener came in, followed by the doctor who took in the situation, frowned at the contorted figure on the floor, then started to work.

"Still alive," he said, taking out his stethoscope. "Heart's okay."

"What happened?" Ashbrook said softly to the gardener.

"I don't know," Ted said apologetically. "I could tell you what I saw, but it doesn't make sense."

"Tell us what you honestly think you saw," Freemont said. "If it doesn't make sense on the surface it may make even more sense than you think underneath."

"We were about twenty feet from this very spot, just outside. I was looking right at Joe—Dr. Fletcher. Suddenly an arm seemed to materialize right behind him. The hand was pointing at Joe's head and moving toward it at the same time. I tried to say something, then was afraid to because if it wasn't there I would feel silly. It came up so that the finger just touched the back of his head. When it did that he jerked like he was being electrocuted. When I looked for the arm again it was gone. I helped him to the cabin. He kept saying he wanted to call Dr. Ashbrook at the university."

"The two of you were alone at the time?" the judge asked.

The gardener hesitated briefly. "The boy that lives next door was with us at first," he said reluctantly. "In the excitement I guess he ran home. It scared even me, so you can imagine how it must have frightened him." He chuckled uncomfortably.

"Did he see the arm?" the judge

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asked.

"I don't think so," Ted said quickly. "If he had he'd have said something. He wouldn't have been afraid of looking silly like I was."

"Are you sure he went home?" Judge Freemont asked grimly.

"Why . . ." Ted said. Alarm and self condemnation grew in his expression. Suddenly he turned and ran out the door. "I'm going to find out," he called back over his shoulder.

THE doctor had been listening to Ted while continuing his examination. He straightened up as Ted dashed out. "Have to get this man to the hospital," he said, "I'm not sure what's wrong with him, but whatever it is it's something that happened to his brain. We'll have to operate as soon as we get him there and see what we can fiind." He smiled apologetically. "What Ted said seems to me to make more sense than it should on the surface. This man has the visible appearance of a man who has had a finger mix up some of the nerves in his brain."

Judge Freemont turned to Ashbrook. "What did Fletcher say to you over the phone?"

"Where can I call to have an ambulance come here?" the doctor said.

"In the next room," Mrs. Robertson said. "Come with me. I'll show you."

Ashbrook waited until they were out of the room, then said in a voice that couldn't carry far, "I'm not sure of the exact words he used, but the gist of what he said was that somebody or something has stepped in to either kill us or drive us away from contact with Arthur, and perhaps Lin and Joan."

"I've been wondering about that," Freemont said. "Maybe periodic checks *are* made to see how the children are doing. It means that you are in danger too. I would suggest you wait until they find out what's wrong with Fletcher before you see Joan or Lin again."

"I've been thinking that too," Ashbrook said. "This brings out one very important thing though. Whoever or whatever planted these children here intended that they grow up without attracting notice. It—" He broke off as Mrs. Robertson and the doctor came back into the room.

"The ambulance will be here shortly," the doctor said. "Would one of you go out to the street and wait for it?"

Freemont and Ashbrook looked at each other. "Let's both go," Ashbrook said.

"What were you going to say in there?" Freemont asked as they crossed the lawn in the darkness.

"Have you heard of the cow bird?" Ashbrook said. "It lays its eggs in the nest of another bird so that it won't have to hatch them out itself. Suppose these babies belong to some alien race that lives in spaceships rather than on a planet

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mewhere. They could have several fferent reasons for planting their ildren here on Earth."

"Not having room for raising chil-en would be one good reason," shbrook continued after they had ached the sidewalk and looked up d down the street. "An even better ason would be that they could id out all about the human race gathering up their offspring when ey reached maturity and learn om them."

"There's another possible motive," idge Freemont said. "A more sin-er one. What would be the best ay for an alien race to conquer the arth? They could be sure that ese children would gravitate to-ard allegiance to their own kind. ake Lin for example. Already he's mewhat hostile to people around m. Up to now he's taken out that stility on himself, making him-lf a cripple in order to have a le-timate reason to remain by him-lf most of the time. By the time reaches maturity he'll know his ll powers and start using them fulfill his desires."

"And in the course of time most those alien children will discover ie another and form a clique," shbrook said. "It would be a simple atter for them to gain control of e government."

"There's the ambulance," Free-ont said as the epileptically roll-g red eye turned the corner a few ocks away and came toward them. Don't you think it's time for us to call in the Government and present them with what we've found out? If we were killed then no one would know about it."

Unnoticed by either of them a white face appeared in the gloom of nearby bushes.

"Not yet," Ashbrook said. "I want to find out more before we let it get out of our hands."

The white face in the darkness vanished as the ambulance turned into the driveway and came to a stop.

THE gardener was back when they reached the cottage. "Arthur wasn't home," he said in a worried tone. Ashbrook and Freemont nodded, but remained silent while the two ambulance men brought in the stretcher and lifted Fletcher onto it and took him out.

"I've contacted Dr. Gaard, the brain specialist," the doctor said. "He'll be at the hospital by the time we get there. We'll almost certainly perform the operation tonight. If you two gentlemen . . ."

"We'll be down a little later," Freemont said.

Moments later the ambulance and the doctor's car crept out to the driveway and were gone into the night.

The ensuing silence was broken by Mrs. Robertson. "Do you think there's been foul play? Could Arthur have been kidnapped?"

Judge Freemont answered. "It's possible. But it's more likely that

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what happened frightened him and he's hiding somewhere on the grounds." He turned to the gardener. "Ted, you're a good friend of his. Why don't you go out and call to him?"

"I did call on my way back," Ted said, "but I'll go out and call some more."

He started toward the door and had almost reached it when it burst open. Mrs. Arbright came in, worry etched on her face. "Have you found Arthur yet?" she asked sharply.

Ted shook his head. "I was just going out and look some more."

"Oh my goodness! There's the little scamp looking in the window!" Mrs. Robertson said.

Everyone turned in time to see the white face just before it was withdrawn.

"Arthur, come in here!" Mrs. Arbright shouted.

Ted looked uncomfortable, then moved slowly toward the door. He stopped when the doorknob rattled and turned.

The door opened and Arthur stood there. His eyes were round and flat, their blue depths dulled by what seemed to be fear. There was a stubborn line to his lips.

"Why don't you answer when a body calls you, Arthur?" his mother said, scolding. But no one was listening to her.

Arthur's lip began to tremble. It occurred to Ashbrook with a sense of wonder that Arthur was only an eight year old boy. He had been thinking of him for so long as Cosmic Mystery that he had uncon sciously forgotten that whatever els he might be, he was still a boy.

A deep sympathy overcame hin He said, "They've taken Dr. Fletch er to the hospital, Arthur. They'r going to operate on him. Would yo like to go down with us to see wha we can do?"

"It's past his bedtime," Mrs. Ar bright said, then bit her lip.

"Yes," Arthur said. "Oh, yes, want to go down with you."

Judge Freemont, taking his cu said quickly, "Then we'd better ge started. We'll bring him home a soon as we can, Mrs. Arbright."

"Maybe I'd better go with him, she said doubtfully.

"I'm sure that won't be neces sary," Judge Freemont soothec lifting his eyebrows at Ashbrook an moving toward the door. He too Arthur's hand and led him out, put ting as much finality into the cu of his shoulders as was possible.

FREEMONT and Ashbrook wer silent on the way to the hos pital. Arthur, sitting between ther in the front seat of Ashbrook's car was silent and incredibly still, seem ing not even to breathe.

The traffic seemed abnormall noisy as the car sped downtowr Something rattled in the car back to ward the trunk compartment. An through the windshield the cloudles sky was black and star-studded.

Keeping his eyes straight ahead

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Arthur suddenly spoke. "Are you going to tell the Government?" he asked.

"We don't know yet," Ashbrook said after a moment. "We want to know more about what happened first. Do you want to tell us anything?"

"I . . . no!" Arthur said. Then he began to sniffle. "Yes, I'll tell you," he sobbed. "I did it. I didn't mean to. I don't know why I did it."

They reached the hospital. Ashbrook stopped the car in a parking space reserved for doctors and shut off the motor and the lights.

"I've done it before," Arthur went on, talking faster now and not crying, his voice low. "And I've never hurt anything before. I just wanted to see if I could make him afraid like I can make a dog afraid, by *touching* his brain."

"By touching his brain?" Judge Freemont said. "How do you mean? What do you do?"

"I don't know," Arthur said. "Or rather, I do. I picture that I have a hand and an arm separated from me that can move around wherever I want it to, passing through solid matter sometimes. I hold that in my mind and picture what I want it to touch, and it does."

"Could you do that again and have it make Dr. Fletcher all right again?" Freemont asked gravely.

Arthur shook his head in a frenzy of self reproach and condemnation. "I don't think so," he said. "I don't know what would have to be done, and unless I know I can't do anything. It's like—like breaking a dish."

"Well," Freemont said, opening the door, "let's go into the hospital. We won't say anything about this now, Arthur. But if you think you can help the doctors without letting them know, you should try, you know. If Dr. Fletcher dies . . ." He left the thought unfinished.

"Yes, sir," Arthur said, barely audible.

He got out of the car and stood very small and quiet beside Judge Freemont while Ashbrook locked it. The three of them went into the hospital, their footsteps echoing loudly in the deserted halls.

"Oh yes, Dr. Beaumont left word that you were to go right up when you came," the night desk clerk said, smiling politely. "Second floor and to your right as you step out of the elevator . . ."

"Dr. Ashbrook?" the floor nurse said when they reached the second floor desk. "Come with me." She led the way into a room where there was a large window showing a wide view of an operating room where masked figures were moving around. "You can stay in here. Dr. Beaumont will notice you, but he can't be disturbed while operating."

Arthur had gone straight to the window and pressed his nose against it. Ashbrook and Freemont stood a little away from the window.

Eternities seemed to pass while rubbergloved hands moved with in-

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finite patience beyond the window. There were three men concentrated on the small bit of exposed humanity otherwise covered by sheeting and other worldly devices. In addition there was a man whose task seemed to be to manipulate valves on large gas tanks and watch meters, and two nurses who did nothing but hand gleaming instruments to the three doctors.

And when finally, after what seemed years and which was certainly hours, the three doctors suddenly became rigid as statues, then turned as one to look at the bank of meters, the meaning of the silent drama was unmistakable.

Fletcher was dead.

"No!" Arthur's protesting child voice broke the silence. He began to sob, his small fists pounding futilely against the glass partition.

Freemont and Ashbrook turned away. And in Ashbrook's mind rose —not the picture of the tall, strong Dr. Fletcher of recent weeks—but that of the diminutive nervous little bearded professor that Fletcher had been. And a lump welled up in his throat.

THE door opened and Dr. Beaumont came in, his face drawn and his eyes sunken. "It was unfortunate," he sighed, "but if you care to examine him you will see that he would have died before morning anyway. Most unfortunate. If the damaged area had been anywhere else in the cortical layer it wouldn't have been fatal." His attention was attracted by Arthur who was still pressed against the glass partition, crying. "His father?" he asked.

"No," Ashbrook said. "Just a—a good friend to him."

"I killed him!" Arthur cried, pounding his small fists against the glass.

Dr. Beaumont compressed his lips, then stuck his head out the door and called to a nurse, ordering a sedative. When she brought it in he made Arthur take the pill and drink the glass of water.

"I think I need something myself," he said. "This has been one of those times when a doctor wonders about logic . . . Well, I'll have to say goodnight, gentlemen. Nurse, if either of them want a sedative give it to him. Goodnight, gentlemen." He turned wearily and left.

Ashbrook and Freemont were silent as they drove Arthur home. He was asleep by the time they reached his house. It was Freemont who carried him in and turned him over to Mrs. Arbright who proceeded to undress him with tender care.

Then the two men were back in the car, with the headlights boring a hole in the darkness. They were silent for a long time. Then Ashbrook gave a short bitter laugh.

"Well," he said, "where do we go from here?" When Judge Freemont didn't answer he went on, his voice bitter. "I was worrying about giving these youngsters ideas. It seems they can get ideas of their own. If

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had been something alien, unıown, it would at least have been ımething to cope with. How can ɔu deal with a child that doesn't alize his powers? He can't even be ıged to keep him from harming hers, like a young gorilla could. 'hat will happen, I wonder, when ıe of these children starts experi-enting with mental fission of the om?"

"It seems to me," Judge Freeont said slowly, "that the best ɔurse is to try to get them all to-ɛther into some kind of home where ıey can be studied and guided in ıeir development, and taught some f the dangers. For example, if Arıur had felt free to discuss what e wanted to do he could have arned beforehand that it was too angerous an experiment."

"Maybe you're right," Ashbrook ıid. "Still, I can't help feeling that's ıe wrong thing to do. If they're ept separated we can handle each ne as an individual. Together I ɛel they will forge ahead of us too ıst. But there's another solution. nhumane, perhaps, but the only ɛally safe solution. Destroy them. 'hey're too dangerous, potentially. t's like a bunch of kids having a 'ourth of July picnic in a dynamite ıctory, with the whole universe the ynamite factory." His bitter huckle came again. "Maybe that's 'hy whatever left them on doorsteps ere on Earth did it. To get rid of hem. Here all they can do is blow p one insignificant planet."

"That's an interesting thought," Freemont said. "Maybe they aren't the norm of this alien race. Maybe they are mutations. Recognized mutations."

"Maybe," Ashbrook said, scowling at the tunnel of light the headlights made in the street. "And maybe they're deliberate mutations. On our own race. It's not beyond the realms of possibility you know. If we could only get behind things, guess at who or what did this thing, and why . . . Is it an experiment, and is the prime mover sitting back to see what will happen when these youngsters grow up? Or is it a deliberate act, performed by something that knows what will inevitably happen? That last question is the reason I hesitate to let the Government in on this and bring all those kids together. The natural thing would be to do that, bring them together and try to develop their powers under control."

Freemont shook his head. "It seems to me from the way they were scattered that what was intended was for each of them to grow up without having attracted any attention."

"You mean that whatever caused all this hoped they wouldn't attract attention?" Ashbrook said. "That would be a rather naive assumption. But also it might fit in with an alien line of thought."

A startled gasp escaped his lips. Unconsciously he braked the car almost to a stop.

"What is it?" Freemont asked anx-

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iously.

"Something just clicked in my mind," Ashbrook said. He stopped the car altogether and turned excited eyes to the judge. "Arthur changed plants from their normal growth. Suppose these children are not necessarily human. Suppose the race that planted them here gave them human shape so they would be accepted. Then, basically, they would be non-human. They wouldn't know that, of course."

"What would be their native shape?" Freemont asked.

Ashbrook shook his head. "That doesn't matter. It could be a variable all the time. What does matte is that maybe they should be brough together and raised by a small grou of scientists, in some isolated plac where they can all be destroyed a once if they prove dangerous. Ou next move must be to convince th Government of this."

"I don't agree about destroyin them," Judge Freemont said, hi mouth quirking into a half smile "but I've felt all along they shoul be brought together. And raised to gether."

(To be concluded next issue)

STATEMENT OF THE OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION RE QUIRED BY THE ACT OF CONGRESS OF AUGUST 24, 1912, AS AMENDED BY THE ACTS OF MARCH 3, 1933, AND JULY 2, 1946 (39 U. S. C. 233)

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1. The names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor and busi ness managers are:

Publisher, Clark Publishing Company ----------1144 Ashland Avenue, Evanston, Ill
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Managing editor, Beatrice Mahaffey ---------- ---- 1104 Greenwood, Evanston, Ill
Business manager, Raymond A. Palmer ---------- Rt. 2, Box 36, Amherst, Wisc

2. The owner is: (If owned by a corporation, its name and address must be stated and also immediately thereunder the names and addresses of stockholders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation, the names and addresses of the individual owners must be given. I owned by a partnership or other unincorporated firm, its name and address, as wel as those of each individual member, must be given.)

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3. The known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: None.

4. The two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders, and security holders, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such rustee is acting, is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner; and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest direct or indirect in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as so stated by him.

5. The average number of copies of each issue of this publication sold or distributed, through the mails or otherwise, to paid subscribers during the 12 months preceding the date shown above was: (This information is required from daily, weekly, semiweekly, and triweekly newspapers only.)

RAYMOND A. PALMER, Editor

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 15th day of September, 1950.

(SEAL) Chester V. Lepal (My Commission expires Jan. 25, 1953).

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The REAL Flying Saucer

By Kenneth Arnold

An exclusive and conclusive assembly of the TRUE facts on the REALITY of the mysterious aircraft misnamed "The Flying Saucers", by the famed pilot who first reported them to the public. Proof that those who deny them are lying!

THE American Public, since July 10, 1947, has read a variety of newspaper stories, magazine articles and at least three books concerning a phenomenon which has become known, through an unfortunate selection of words, as the flying saucer.

Some of these stories have been written by scientists and science editors whose opinions are highly respected; others have been official pronouncements from high sources (as high as the Secretary of the President of the United States) including all branches of the military and intelligence services; still more have been by writers and newspapermen addicted to yellow journalism; and finally, by outright crackpots. Much of this mass of opinion has been accepted as factual rather than theoretical and, in the case of authority, as an actual explanation for the mysterious sky objects. The truth is none of these respected and widely circulated statements were written by persons who actually saw the objects they discuss and dismiss so officiously.

It has been strange and unjust that the testimony of reputable and highly trained observers of the sky objects has been denied the same widespread publicity that has attended the theoretical and skeptical statement.

Actual observers of flying saucers, such as myself and Captain E. J. Smith of United Airlines (who were largely responsible, in that order, for the initial impetus to the story which became the sensation of the world press for more than two weeks) have been the butt of such ridicule, of such newspaper notoriety, and the objects of so much irrelevant and even insulting investigation that it has served to cause other observers in responsible positions to keep tightly buttoned lips concerning their observations.

It is time we were heard, and it is also time that factual report-

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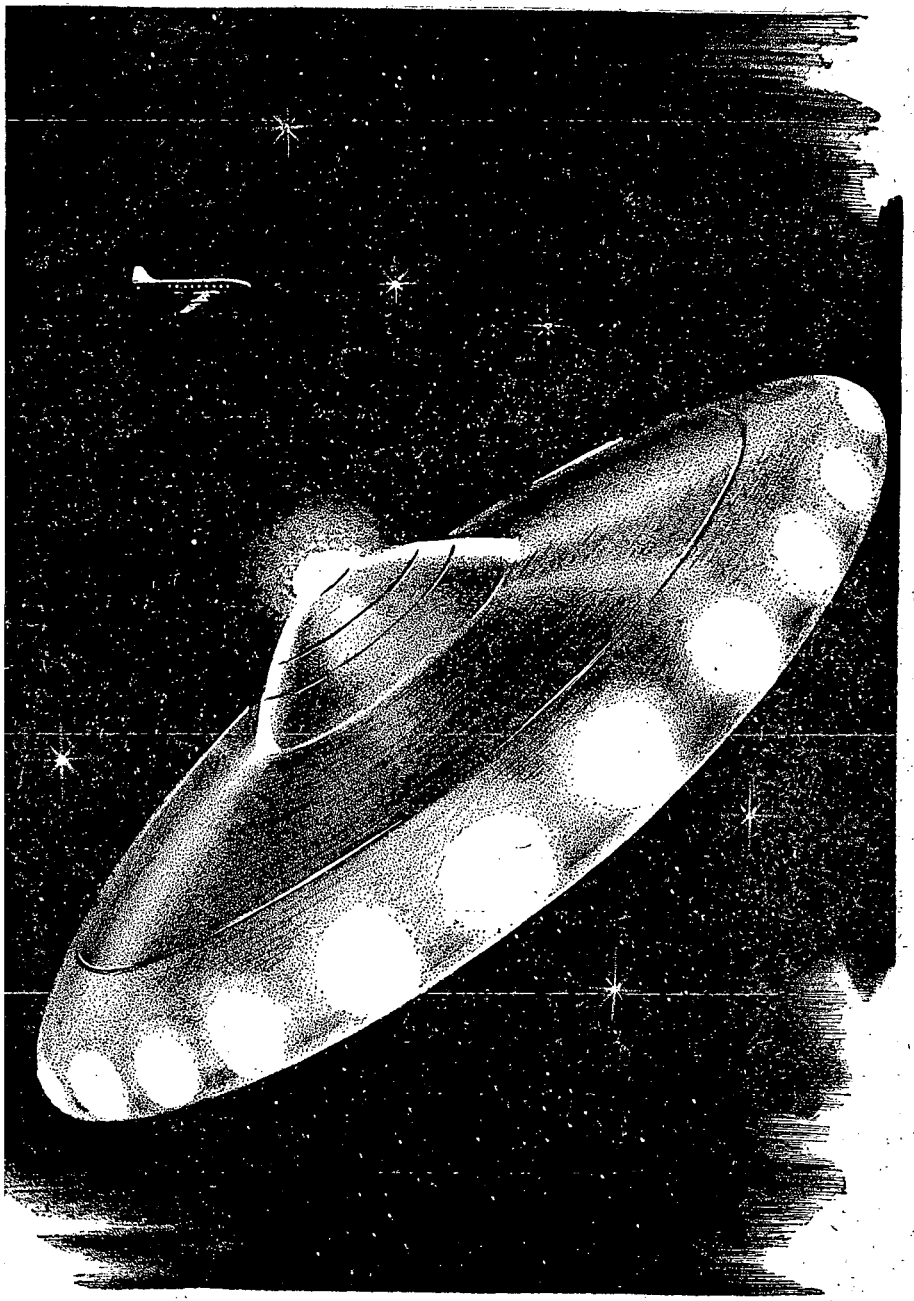

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ing replaces wild theory, fanciful imaginings and even outright falsification.

Officials and experts have explained the flying saucers by ignoring facts; and in some instances, by distorting them. I want to present these facts here, without advancing theories and avoiding conclusions. Any explanation that can be made thereafter must satisfactorily include every factor in the evidence which I am about to produce, otherwise it will have no semblance to true scientific method.

Since 1944 I have spent more than 4000 hours in the air, flying in mountainous country. I sell fire extinguishing apparatus by calling on customers in five western states by plane. I also take an active part in Idaho Search and Rescue flights as well as flying deputy for the Ada County Aerial Posse. Any pilot flying this vast and sometimes primitive territory must have good eyesight and a high degree of recognition and precision in his makeup, or he doesn't live long.

What I saw over the Cascade Mountains in the State of Washington is fact; I cannot logically classify my observation in the category of illusion, hallucination or apparition. My physical and mental health is a matter of record.

ON Tuesday, June 24, 1947, I had finished installing fire fighting apparatus for Central Air Service at Chehallis, Washington, and was discussing a lost C-46 Marine transport supposed down in the vicinity of Mount Rainier with Herb Critzer, chief pilot for CAS. I decided, as a result, to spend enough time in the air on my flight to Yakima to make an attempt to locate the wreckage, since there was a $5000 reward being offered for finding it. My plane is a specially designed mountain-flying type, and with my experience in this kind of flying, I felt qualified to engage in the hunt.

I took off at 2:00 p.m. and flew directly toward the Rainier plateau (elevation between 9000 and 10,500 feet). While making a turn over Mineral, Washington, at approximately 9200 feet, a bright flash illuminated the surfaces of my aircraft. This alarmed me as I thought I was dangerously close to another plane. I searched the sky hastily in an attempt to determine the source of the flash. The only plane I saw was a DC-4 far to my left and rear. Then the flash came again.

This time I observed a formation of very bright objects to the north, approaching from the vicinity of Mount Baker. They were flying close to the mountain tops and traveling at tremendous speed.

At first I couldn't make out their shapes as they were still at a great distance, however I observed that the formation was going to pass directly in front of me. Thinking I was observing a formation of "jets," I watched the objects approach the snow border of Mount Rainier.

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There were nine of the objects flying in echelon formation with a disproportionately larger gap between the first four and the last five.

At this point I was startled to observe there were no tails on the objects. I felt sure, being jets, they had tails, but thought they had been camouflaged in some way; I knew the military was very artful in its use. But when they flipped and flashed along with the snow behind them I saw their outlines plainly. They had no tails.

The aircraft were traveling from north to south at almost right angles to me, so I was in a good position to clock their speed. I made an attempt to do so. The bulks of Rainier and Adams made perfect markers. When the first of the craft left the snow-based cleft of Mount Rainier, going southward, the second hand on my clock was approaching the top of my hour dial and the time was within a few seconds of 2:59 (Mountain time).

The aircraft didn't fly like any I had ever seen before. Their echelon formation was the reverse of that practiced by our Air Force; the first craft being at a greater elevation than the last. They definitely flew in formation, but erratically, in a weaving motion. Their movement was comparable to speed boats on rough water, or a formation of geese, in a rather diagonal chain-like line. As I put it to a newsman in Pendleton, Oregon, they flew like a saucer would if you skipped it across the water.

At the time I did not get the impression that the very bright blue-white flashes emitted from their surfaces as they alternately tipped from one side to the other, were emissions, but rather that it was the sun's reflection from their extremely highly polished surfaces.

They held a constant direction, changed only by the necessity of swerving in and out among the peaks that form the hogback of the Cascades between Rainier and Adams. I determined my distance from their pathway to be in the vicinity of 23 miles: I knew where I was, and I placed the objects when they momentarily disappeared behind a jagged peak that juts out from the base of Mount Rainier proper. This estimation is approximate, because I was myself flying in the direction of the formation, but it is close enough for computation.

There is a very high plateau with quite definite north and south edges between Mount Rainier and Mount Adams. Part of the chain-like formation of aircraft appeared to be traveling above this plateau toward Mount Adams, while part dipped below the rim on my side. As the first unit cleared the southernmost edge of this background, the last of the formation was just entering the northern edge. I later flew my plane over this course and came to the conclusion that the formation had formed a chain approximately five miles long.

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As the last of this group of objects sped past and seemed to gather altitude beyond the southernmost crest of Mount Adams, I glanced again at my clock. The entire time of observation covering the distance between Mount Rainier to the north and Mount Adams to the south had been one minute and forty-two seconds.

I was so amazed by my experience that I gave up the search for the C-46. I wanted to get to Yakima and tell what I had seen.

About 4:00 p.m. I landed at Yakima and asked Al Baxter, general manager of Central Aircraft, to see me in private. He dropped what he was doing, took me into his office, where I told him of my observation and drew him pictures of what I had seen. He called in several of his flight pilots and helicopter instructors to listen to my story. My enthusiasm was cooled a bit when one of the helicopter pilots said, "Ahh, it's just a flight of those guided missiles from Moses Lake."

I got back into my airplane and took off for Pendleton, Oregon. While flying, I remembered that I had forgotten to tell them that one of these craft was darker and of a slightly different shape, and that I hadn't told them I'd clocked their speed within fairly accurate limits. I took my map from its snap holder, grabbed my ruler and began estimating miles per hour. Flying my airplane at the same time was a little confusing, so I gave up, thinking my figures were wrong.

When I landed at Pendleton, there was quite a group of people to meet me. Before very long it seemed everybody around the airfield was listening to my story and figuring out the speed of the mystery objects. When it kept coming out at an excess of 1700 miles per hour somebody said, "We're taking the measurements from too high up on both Mount Rainier and Mount Adams." So we took a measurement at the very base, far below the snow line and actually much shorter than the course I'd clocked. It was 39.8 miles. Even at this distance, which was so far on the conservative side that I knew it was incorrect, we still had a speed of over 1350 miles per hour. To me, that was that. They must be guided missiles, robotly controlled. I knew that at speeds of this velocity, the human body could not withstand the flipping, erratic movements of these strange craft.

I didn't get any sleep that night. Reporters, writers, press agencies and just curious people plagued me with questions. Nor can I begin to estimate the number of telegrams, phone calls and letters I tried to answer. After three days of this hubbub I came to the conclusion that I was the only sane one in the lot. From the number of reports that came in of other sightings, it wouldn't be long before there was a flying saucer in every garage. In order to stop what I thought was a

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lot of foolishness, I flew to my home at Boise.

There Dave Johnson, aviation editor of the *Idaho Statesman* newspaper, a man whose ability and intelligence in matters related to military and civilian aviation I respected, called on me. When he had finished talking, I really began to wonder, because it seemed certain now that I was wrong in ascribing my sighting to a new military guided missile, and that the good old U.S.A. had nothing to do with my flying saucers.

ON July 5, 1947, I had just landed at Seattle's Boeing Field with Colonel Paul Wieland, who had just returned from Germany where he had served as a judge in the Malmedy case and the Nuremburg trials. We had been on a fishing trip off Seku, Washington, and had observed the mysterious "red tide" there. Immediately I was informed of the saucer sighting by United Airlines flight 105 out of Boise at 9:04 p.m. the night before. Captain E. J. Smith, probably the most highly respected veteran pilot United Airlines has, had seen the saucers too, and his sighting was supported and verified by his entire DC-3 crew.

I was so excited by their observation that I purchased every paper available at the Terminal Building newsstand. In one of the pictures was a photo of a flying disk taken by Frank Ryman, a Coast Guard yeoman: He had taken the picture the night before.

I forgot about Colonel Wieland waiting for me at my plane and rushed uptown Seattle to the offices of International News Service to see the blown-up prints of the picture. Their reporter appeared happy enough to show it to me, but demanded to know who I was. I was reporter shy by this time, but had no alternative but to give my name. When I did, he grasped me by the arm and rushed me down to the ante room of the news building. There I met Captain E. J. Smith and his co-pilot, Ralph Stevens.

Here is the story as Captain Smith told it to me: "We landed our DC-3 at Boise shortly before 9:00 last night and not wishing to be late in our schedule, took off promptly at 9:04. The weather was perfect. It was a funny thing, but just before take-off, as I was climbing aboard our DC-3, someone in the crowd piped up and asked me if I'd seen any flying saucers. Up to this time I not only hadn't seen any, but really didn't believe there were such things. I yelled back at the enquirer that I would believe them when I saw them.

"Brother, you could have knocked me over with a feather when about eight minutes after take-off, at 7100 feet over Emmett, Idaho, we saw not one, but nine of them. At first I thought it was a group of light planes returning from some Fourth of July celebration, but then I real-

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ized the things weren't aircraft, but were flat and circular.

"The first group of five appeared to open and close in formation, then veered to the left of the transport. I picked up my radio microphone and called the Ontario, Oregon CAA Radio Communication station, which was about 45 miles north and west from Boise. I didn't tell them what I was seeing, but said, 'Step outside and look to the southwest, about fifteen miles, and see what you can find.' The operator came back over the microphone and stated he saw nothing.

"At this time my co-pilot informed me the first group of disks had disappeared. It was then the second group, three together and a fourth off by itself, appeared. By then the transport had reached 8000 feet altitude and was cruising over the rugged country leading toward the Blue Mountains toward Pendleton, Oregon.

"My co-pilot saw exactly what I did when he stated that these objects seemed to merge, then disappear, then come back in sight, and finally vanish again to the northwest. This second group seemed to be higher than our flight path, and when they did leave, they left! Fast!

"I positively know they were nothing from the ground in the way of fireworks, reflections or smoke. I know they were not aircraft that I am familiar with. I don't know how fast they were going, but we all saw them. They were flat on the bottom, circular, and seemed rough on top. They were bigger than our aircraft."

I finally remembered Colonel Wieland and rushed back to the airport. I told him the story and we took off for Boise.

IN the next week I was requested to send in a full report of my experience to the commanding officer of Wright Patterson Field at Dayton, Ohio. I did so.

I was also visited by two representatives of A-2 Military Intelligence of the Fourth Air Force, Lieutenant Frank M. Brown and Captain William Davidson. They said they didn't know what flying saucers were. They quizzed me closely.

That evening at about 9:30, Captain Smith was coming through Boise. When I informed Davidson and Brown, they were elated, as he was on their list to question. We met at the Boise airport.

I was surprised to find Dave Johnson there, then it occurred to me that the military wanted to talk to him also. Only a few days previously he had observed and attempted to photograph a disk-like object which he had observed from his National Guard AT-6 while flying at 14,000 feet over Anderson Dam, east of Boise.

Captain Smith's stay between flights was brief, so none of us found out much, but I did learn that Davidson and Brown had flown to Boise in a military A-26 bomber

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especially to see me. I was impressed, because these military craft are so big and powerful I had the idea that brains were sticking out all over anyone who could fly them.

Later, at my home, I laid all my facts before Davidson and Brown, but somehow, again neglected to tell them about the difference between the single object in the formation I had seen and the others. In fact, I had never even told my wife, because I attributed the difference to the angle at which I had observed this particular saucership.

The two A-2 men went through all my mail, selecting the names of persons, societies, organizations, who had written me asking for full accounts of my original experience. When I returned them to their hotel, they firmly impressed me with the idea that if anything of an unusual nature came to my attention, or if I needed help in any way, I was to phone them or wire collect in care of A-2, Fourth Air Force, Hamilton Field, California. They also cautioned me that it would be better for all concerned if I refused to discuss my experience further with outsiders.

THEN I received a letter from R. A. Palmer of Chicago, who told me of two harbor patrolmen at Tacoma, Washington—Harold A. Dahl and Fred L. Crisman—who claimed they had not only seen a group of saucers, but that they had in their possession some fragments that came from one of them. Mr. Palmer offered expense money to investigate this report.

The next day, during a discussion with Dave Johnson, he revealed that he, too, had been requested to file a complete written report with the commanding officer at Wright Patterson Field. We didn't know it yet, but "Project Saucer" was already in full swing. I mentioned the Tacoma incident and the result was I flew to Tacoma on July 29, 1947, on an adventure that almost scared me out of the flying saucer picture. I took off about 5:00 a.m.

It was about 6:55 a.m. over the La Grande Valley that I saw a cluster of twenty to twenty-five brass-colored objects I took to be ducks. They were coming head-on and at what seemed a terrific rate of speed. I grabbed my camera and started shooting. Even though I thought they were ducks, I wasn't taking any chances.

The sun was at my back and to the right. The objects were coming into the sun. I wasn't sighting through the viewfinder on my camera, but along the side of it. As this group of objects came within 400 yards of me, they veered sharply away to the right, gaining altitude as they did so, and fluttering and flashing a dull amber color. I was a bit shocked and excited when I realized that they had the same flight characteristics as the large objects I had observed on June 24. They appeared to be round,

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rather rough on top, and to have a dark or a light spot on top of each one. I couldn't be absolutely positive of which, as it all happened so suddenly. I attempted to make a turn and follow them, but they disappeared to the east at a speed far in excess of my airplane. I know they weren't ducks.

Later, when the film was developed, I found my movie try had not been very successful. Only two of these objects could be found on the film, and could be seen only under a jeweler's glass.

I won't detail the trouble I had getting the reluctant Mr. Dahl to talk, but I finally got his story:

"On June 21, 1947, about 2:00 p.m. I was patrolling the east bay of Maury Island close in to the shore. The practically uninhabited island lies directly opposite the city of Tacoma about three miles from the mainland. This day the sea was rather rough and there were numerous low-hanging clouds. I, as captain, was steering my patrol boat close to the shore of a bay on Maury Island. On board were my two crewmen, my fifteen-year-old son and his dog.

"I looked up from the wheel and noticed six very large doughnut-shaped aircraft. I would judge they were about 2000 feet above the water and almost directly overhead. At first glance I thought them to be balloons, as they seemed to be stationary. However, upon further observance I saw that five of these strange aircraft were circling slowly around the sixth which was stationary in the center of the formation. It appeared to me that the center aircraft was in some kind of trouble as it was losing altitude fairly rapidly. The other aircraft stayed at a distance of about 200 feet above the center one as if they were following it down. The center aircraft came to rest almost directly overhead about 500 feet above the water.

"All on board our boat were watching these aircraft with a great deal of interest as they apparently had no motors, propellers, or any other visible sign of propulsion. To the best of our hearing they made no sound. They were at least 100 feet in diameter. Each had a hole in the center, approximately 25 feet across. They were all sort of gold and silver color. Their surface seemed of metal and when the light shone on them through the clouds they were brilliant, not all of one brilliance, but many brilliances, something like a Buick burled dashboard. All of the aircraft seemed to have large portholes equally spaced around the outside of their doughnut exterior. These portholes were from five to six feet in diameter and were round. There also appeared to be a dark, circular, continuous window on the inside and bottom of the doughnut as though it were an observation window.

"All of us on the boat were afraid

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this center balloon would crash into the bay, and just a little while before it stopped lowering, we pulled our boat over to the beach and got out with our harbor patrol camera. I took four photographs of these balloons.

"The center balloon-like aircraft remained stationary at about 500 feet from the water, while the other five aircraft kept circling over it. After about five or six minutes one of the aircraft from the circling formation left its place and descended to the stationary aircraft. In fact, it appeared to touch and stayed beside the center aircraft for three or four minutes as if it were giving some sort of assistance.

"It was then we heard a dull noise like an underground explosion, or a thud similar to a man stamping his heel on damp ground. Immediately following this sound the center aircraft began spewing out what looked from that distance like thousands of newspapers from somewhere inside its center. These newspapers, which turned out to be sheets of a very light weight white metal, fluttered to earth, most of them lighting in the bay. It then seemed to hail, in the bay and on the beach, black or darker type metal which later looked similar to lava rock. We did not know if this metal was coming from the aircraft, but seemed that it was, as it fell at the same time the white metal was falling. However, since these fragments were of a darker color, we did not observe them until they started hitting the beach and the bay. All of these late fragments seemed hot, almost molten. When they hit the bay, steam rose from the water.

"We ran for the shelter under a cliff on the beach and behind logs to protect ourselves from the falling debris. In spite of our precautions, my son's arm was injured by one of the falling fragments and our dog was hit and killed.

"After this rain of metal seemed over, all of these strange aircraft lifted slowly and disappeared to the west, which is out to sea. They rose and vanished at a tremendous height.

"We tried to pick up several pieces of the metal and found them very hot indeed. After they had cooled, we loaded a considerable number of them aboard the boat. We also picked up some of the metal which had looked like falling newspapers.

"The wheelhouse of our boat had been hit by the falling debris and damaged. We started the engines and went directly to Tacoma where my boy was given first aid at the hospital. I told my superior officer, Fred L. Crisman, of our experience. I gave him the film to develop. The negatives showed these strange aircraft, but they were covered with spots similar to a negative that has been close to an x-ray room, except the spots were white instead of black."

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ATER, at his home, Dahl showed me fragments that I judged to be lava rock. But then I remembered the cinders or lava ash that had fallen to the ground near Mountain Home, Idaho, the 12th day of July, 1947, after a formation of flying saucers had passed over that area. The man who picked up portions of this ash sent it to the state chemical laboratory for analysis. I began to become excited. I decided to call in Captain Smith to help me in this investigation.

I flew to Seattle and brought Captain Smith back to Tacoma with me.

Mysterious things began to happen that gradually bewildered us. For instance, Ted Morello, of United Press, their head man in Tacoma, called and I started to hang up on him. He said, "Hold on minute. Some crackpot has been phoning us here, telling us verbatim what has been going on in your hotel room." He proved it by relating some of the discussions we'd had. Both Smith and I suspected Dahl or Crisman of letting out the secret nature of our visit. We also ripped the room apart looking for dictaphones. We found nothing.

Crisman and Dahl brought in an armload of the black and white metal. We decided the white metal did not answer Dahl's original description, as it seemed ordinary aluminum from junked planes, except that the rivets were square instead of round. The black metal we could not identify, but piecing it together, we found it would form a curve about six feet in diameter, and we concluded it might easily be the lining of a large rocket or jet tube.

Becoming more and more suspicious when we failed to turn up the film Dahl had supposedly taken, we finally decided to call in Davidson and Brown of A-2. I called Frank M. Brown person-to-person, heard him refuse to take the call on the base. Instead he called me back from an off-base pay phone. "Sit tight," he said. "We'll be there."

When Davidson and Brown arrived, they proceeded to question everybody thoroughly, gathered fragments of the two metals. During the conversation, Davidson took a piece of paper from his pocket and drew a picture. It was a disk identical to the one peculiar shaped saucer I had seen that first day, and which I'd not spoken of to anyone until this minute. Said Davidson, "This is a drawing of one of several photographs we consider to be authentic. We just received them from Phoenix, Arizona. We have prints at Hamilton Field, but the original negatives were flown to Washington, D. C."

Excitedly, I explained why and how I knew the picture was authentic.

At midnight Brown and Davidson revealed they had to leave, because they had flown to Tacoma in a B-25 bomber that had just gone through a complete major overhaul, bringing it up to date with the latest Air

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Force equipment, plus two brand new engines. It had to be on the flight line and ready in the morning.

In front of the hotel, Davidson and Brown packed all their fragments, plus an additional Kellogg Corn Flakes boxful Crisman supplied, into their Army command car, and I helped lift the box. In doing so, I opened the flap and handled one of the fragments. It seemed to me to be more rocky and less metallic than the other fragments. I remember being suspicious of Crisman. I was suspicious of everything now, except the importance to me of Davidson's and Brown's visit.

At 1:30 a.m. the B-25 carrying Brown and Davidson crashed near Kelso, Washington, killing them both. My first private investigation into flying saucers had resulted in the death of two government men and the loss of a government bomber. I suddenly didn't want to play investigator any more.

However, I did check the hospital records and found Dahl's son had been treated on the day in question. Smith and I also viewed the damaged boat, noting new repairs to the wheelhouse.

Project Saucer later reported this Tacoma incident had been a complete hoax. Whatever it was, out of it came several important facts which proved to me that what I had seen over the Cascades were the real thing, the flying saucers whose mystery I was trying to solve and doing so badly at it.

NO testimony of this kind is complete without corroborating evidence. The incidents I present in the following are all from reliable and competent witnesses, and each one can be confirmed by the observers themselves at any time.

By July 7, 1947, the skeptics were crying, "Show us some pictures!" The big dailies were demanding such evidence as they wrote scoffing and sometimes hilarious articles about flying coffee cups, teapots and pickle forks. Then, on July 7, William H. Rhodes of Phoenix, Arizona, snapped two pictures of a flying disk circling over the city. He turned these pictures over to *The Arizona Republic* which published them on page one of the July 9 edition. These pictures were not merely dots in a negative, but showed the definite shape of the flying disks and revealed that they had a hole or bright spot in their centers. There were a great many witnesses, some of whom said later when asked, that the photos were reproductions of the object they had seen in the skies. Here was *proof positive* that these objects were not "spots before the eyes," but actually flying disks of an aeronautical design unrecognized by experts. These were the pictures Brown and Davidson (whom I discovered were high in Special Services Intelligence, highest in the land) had declared authentic hours before their tragic death.

Those pictures never reached any other newspaper, in spite of the fact

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that they were the *hottest* news in the world on July 9, 1947. On July 10 complete silence descended over the saucer story. An unofficial, but effective, censorship had been tightly clamped down. Project Saucer had become a reality which was to cost the taxpayers millions before it was officially "dropped" although it continued its investigations unabated, since they are still going on, as witnessed by most recent saucer observers' experience, some of which I will mention.

Later, on a trip to Hamilton Field, I was shown these photos, and actually given prints since at that time Intelligence was extremely interested in cooperating with competent observers, and obviously considered me to be such in view of their complete confidence in me.

Photographer Rhodes gave several interesting facts concerning saucer performance which were corroborated by other witnesses at Phoenix, among them competent military observers. "In three flights over the house, on a clockwise course, the saucer flew at 1000 feet elevation and made absolutely no sound of motor or jets, but only a 'whoosh' of passage. When it disappeared, it turned on its thin edge and shot straight up into the ether at incredible speed."

Rhodes also said there were "twin trails of vapor trailing from the points or edges to the rear of the heel-shaped object."

Next came an official release from Lt. Colonel Donald L. Springer of the Fourth Air Force at Hamilton Field. It stated on August 9 that there were no such things as flying disks. It also stated that Springer went to Tacoma and brought back fragments resembling molten metal found on the Maury Island beach. "Similar material appears in great quantity in the area and other Tacoma areas." It was finally stated that no trace of a box of such fragments had been found in the wreckage of the crashed B-25. To me this last statement poses a great mystery, because I was *there*. I *know* the fragments were aboard. The answer must lie in the statement by Major George Sanders at McChord Field, Tacoma, from which the ill-fated B-25 had taken off that the plane contained "classified material," which means, in Intelligence parlance, "highly secret."

For those who wish to classify the Tacoma incident as a hoax or as a reality, I present here the analysis of the mystery metal:

High Constituents—Calcium, Iron, Zinc, Titanium.

Middle Constituents — Aluminum Manganese, Copper, Magnesium, Silicon.

Low Constituents—Nickel, Lead, Strontium, Chromium.

Traces—Silver, Tin, Cadmium.

Nothing of an unusual nature exists in this combination of metals except the unusually high quantity of Calcium. Calcium oxidizes when heated, and its presence in a high-

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constituent quantity in a fused metal which has been subjected to extreme heat is hard to explain. Technically, it would involve a very difficult processing procedure. Its presence in this material is mystifying. If it is a manufactured substance, its purpose in the mixture is equally difficult to understand.

It is interesting to note that Titanium, one of the high-constituent metals, is now believed to be the key metal in constructing missiles or ships capable of space travel. Also, Calcium has an affinity for radioactive particles, and the ability to capture them and prevent contamination of surrounding areas.

A great deal of publicity has been given to two Air National Guard incidents. One involves Captain Thomas F. Mantell, Jr., who crashed to his death near Franklin, Kentucky, while chasing what he described as a very large metallic object, and which was described by Colonel Guy F. Hix, commander of Godman Field, who watched it for two hours from the observation tower as "to the south, very white and looking like an umbrella." Project Saucer reported this as the planet Venus, although it obviously was not, and later it was identified as a balloon.

The second incident is that of Lieutenant George Gorman of Fargo, North Dakota, who staged a twenty-minute dogfight at night with a small, luminous flying disk which he twice tried to crash into in an effort to bring it down, but which eluded him at speeds up to 600 miles per hour.

On June 5, 1949, Walter Winchell reported: "Air Force people are convinced the flying disk is real. The clincher came when the Air Force got a picture recently of three disks flying in formation over Stephensville, Newfoundland (the great transatlantic air base). They outdistanced our fastest ships."

At 2:45 early one July morning in 1948, Captain Clarence Shipe Chiles and co-pilot John B. Whitted were 20 miles southwest of Montgomery, Alabama, at 5000 feet. Chiles' story is as follows: "We had our eyes focused on the point from which the thing came. From the right and slightly above us came a bright glow and the long rocketlike ship took form in the distance.

" 'It's a jet job,' I said to Whitted.

"Then it grew larger and pulled up alongside. It appeared to be about 100 feet long with a huge fuselage three times as large as that of a B-29.

" 'It's too big for a jet, but what the devil is it?' asked Whitted.

"There were two rows of windows and it appeared definitely to be a two-decker. The lights from the side were a ghastly white, like the glow of a gas light—the whitest we'd ever seen.

"There was a long shaft on the ship's nose that looked like it might have been part of the radar con-

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rols. The ship acted that way too, or just after it pulled alongside us t whipped quickly upward at a ery sharp angle."

Both craft veered to their respective left. The mystery ship passed bout 700 feet to the right and bove the airliner.

"Then, as if the pilot had seen is and wanted to avoid us, it pulled p with a tremendous burst of lame from the rear and zoomed into he clouds, its prop wash or jet rocking our DC-3."

The wingless craft gave the impression of having a pilot's cabin at he front of a cigar-shaped fuselage. The cabin was brightly lighted but he fuselage itself approximated the brilliance of a magnesium flare.

"We saw no occupants," Chiles aid. "From the side of the craft ame an intense, fairly dark blue low that ran the entire length of he fuselage, like a blue fluorescent actory light. The exhaust was a ed-orange flame, with a lighter color predominant around the outer dges."

Both Chiles and Whitted agreed hat the exhaust flame extended 30 o 50 feet behind the object and became deeper in intensity as the craft pulled up into a cloud. They estimated its speed as being about one-third faster than ordinary jets, or about 700-900 miles per hour.

MARCH 31, 1950, Captain Jack Adams, veteran of 7000 hours in the air and seven years on the Chicago and Southern Airlines, and co-pilot G. W. Anderson, Jr., who has 6000 flying hours time to his credit, saw "one of those things" at 9:29 p.m. It was a lighted, fast-moving object, definitely not any known type of aircraft.

"It was about 1000 feet above us about a half-mile away. It zoomed at terrific speed (perhaps as much as 700 to 1000 miles per hour) in an arc ahead and above us, moving from south to north.

"This object remained in full view for about 30 seconds, and we got a good look. It had no navigation lights, but as it passed ahead of us in an arc we could plainly see other lights—as though from eight or ten lighted windows or ports—on the lower side.

"The lights had a fluorescent quality. They were soft and fuzzy, unlike any we'd seen before. The object was circular, apparently, and the lights remained distinct all the time it was in our view. There was no reflection, no exhaust, and no vapor trail. That's definite.

"There was a bright white light flashing intermittently from the top of the thing. The speed attracted our attention first, that and the blinking light. It was the strongest blue-white light we've ever seen."

April 27, 1950. Captain Adickes and First Officer Robert Manning flew their airliner over South Bend, Indiana. Adickes has been flying for 13 years and has been a TWA captain for 6 years.

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"I had just had my dinner and was wide awake when this object flew alongside. It was definitely round, with no irregular features at all, and about 10 to 20 per cent as thick as it was round. It was very smooth and streamlined and glowed evenly with a bright red color as if it were heated stainless steel. It was so bright it gave off a light. It left no vapor, no flame. It appeared to fly on edge, like a wheel going down a highway.

"I went back to show the passengers. Most of them saw it but they couldn't see it as clearly as we did because cabin lights were on and their eyes weren't adjusted to the darkness."

Adickes banked north in an effort to get a closer look. "It appeared to be controlled by repulse radar. As I'd turn toward it, it would veer away, keeping the same distance.

"When I turned directly toward it, it took off at a speed judged to be about 400 m.p.h, about twice my speed. It went down to 1500 feet and streaked out of sight northward over South Bend."

ON May 20, 1950, Captain Willis T. Sperry of American Airlines, out of Washington, D.C., at 9:15 p.m., saw coming toward his DC-6 a brilliant, diffused, bluish light of fluorescent type. Momentarily it seemed to stop, possibly five seconds, and changed its course to parallel the DC-6 on the left.

"Three of us, First Officer Bill Gates, Flight Engineer Robert Arnholt and I got a good look at it. Silhouetted against the moon, it appeared to be the shape of a torpedo or submarine, except there were no protruding fins or external structure of any kind. It appeared to be a perfectly streamlined object of a dark, metallic color, but at night it could have been pink or any other color and looked the same.

"In comparing the speed of this object with jet aircraft (which I have observed many times at close range), I would say without a doubt that the speed of the object was far beyond the limits of any known aircraft. In comparison the speed was fantastic."

January 20, 1951, Captain Larry W. Vinther and co-pilot James F. Bachmeier, flying a Mid-Continent Airline plane, saw a strange object over Sioux City, Iowa. The object had straight wings, no exhaust glow and no jet pods or engines were visible. Vinther was on the ground getting tower clearance for take-off when the tower asked him to check on a strange light in the sky. After take-off, Vinther spotted the light and climbed toward it. He saw a plane which had an unknown kind of navigation lights in addition to a strong white light underneath its fuselage. The object's lights all blinked on and off five or six times as the two craft drew close to each other, approaching from opposite directions.

"I had just turned my head from

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watching him go past our wing when there he was again, flying right beside us about 200 feet to our left and going in the same direction we were. You just can't turn an airplane around that fast at that speed."

The strange plane flew alongside for about four seconds, then dropped down and was lost from sight.

These saucer sightings I have mentioned I consider to be, and they are, of the strictest veracity and the most incontestible accuracy of observation. Their reliability cannot be questioned. And yet, now comes an explanation of the flying saucers in the person of Dr. Urner Liddel, chief of the nuclear physics branch of the Office of Naval Research.

Says he, the flying saucers are huge cosmic balloons called "skyhooks," which have been released in various parts of the country as part of a gigantic cosmic ray research program.

According to Dr. Liddel, their changing appearance under varied light conditions *account for all responsible* saucer reports. Light conditions, Dr. Liddel claims, make the balloons appear variously cupshaped, give them the appearance of trailing an exhaust, give them the appearance of having a strong glow on one side. The instrument-filled tail appears to be a rocket exhaust when illuminated by the sun under certain conditions. Dr. Liddel also claims that the reports of flying saucers began about the time balloons were first launched, and have increased or decreased in accordance with the frequency of the launchings.

Dr. Liddel says that his explanation has never been publicized before because the project was secret. "Now there is no longer any need for secrecy on a scientific basis," he says. "And certainly, there is no longer any need to keep the public in the dark about what flying saucers are."

Nothing could be further from fact than Dr. Liddel's incredible solution.

FIRST of all the Skyhook balloon program has not been a secret as Dr. Liddel claims. One of the first articles ever published on saucers in a national magazine mentioned the cosmic balloons as the basis for some reported saucer sightings. This was, of course, Sidney Shallett's two-part article in the *Saturday Evening Post*. One of the parts was illustrated with a huge photograph of such a balloon. Incidentally, the first part of this article appeared on the same day Project Saucer issued its voluminous report on the flying saucers which stated definitely that "flying disks are no joke."

Next, the statement as to the correlation between flying saucer sightings and balloon launchings is a complete myth with one exception —flying saucers and balloons have both been in the sky since 1947. The actual fact is that flying saucer re-

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ports, many of them as reliable as the ones I have quoted, appeared all during the war. More, these same sky objects have been observed for several hundred years. Notable instances are contained in the collections of newspaperman Charles Fort, who included them in his books on mysteries he encountered and unearthed in his lifetime of research into unusual phenomena. I have talked to numerous war-time pilots who saw flying saucers before any balloon experiments were going on. Further, saucer sightings are not limited to this country, but have been sighted and photographed all over the world.

In addition, Dr. Liddel states that his balloons travel at such tremendous speeds as 200 miles per hour at elevations up to 100,000 feet.

Based on Dr. Liddel's own statements, I cannot help but realize that his balloons account for only scattered and irresponsible sightings. By ignoring facts, Dr. Liddel has made a very weak case for himself indeed.

I challenge Dr. Liddel to fit his balloon hypothesis to a single one of the instances I have given here, with the possible exception of the Mantell incident.

I, and thousands of responsible Americans also, know the flying saucers are a very real, though unexplained, phenomenon, and that they are in no way related to "skyhook" balloons. I have seen mysterious sky objects myself five times, but I have yet to have the pleasure of observing a cosmic ray balloon.

The sun alone confounds the Naval expert, since most of the instances I have quoted occurred at night, when the sun was absent.

It's about time an *honest* investigation of flying saucers was made, and a genuine report given to the American people. And contrary to the amusing legend that has grown up around Orson Welles' "Martian Invasion" broadcast concerning the panic it caused, the American public isn't going to be scared out of its pants at the realization that something almost all of them already know is real, is an actuality.

The flying saucers are still a mystery, to *everybody*.

By Kenneth Arnold

THE FLYING SAUCERS —AS I SAW THEM!

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HAPPY SOLUTION

By

J. P. Caravan

ONCE upon a time there lived an old and evil professor of chemistry, and he taught at a very famous university which stood on the top of a high mountain overlooking the sea. Many young men used to come to this famous university in order to take the professor's course in Chemical Thermodynamics 268b, which was a very good course; and every term ninety eight point six of these young men used to fall in love with the professor's daughter, who was a very beautiful daughter indeed.

Do you think that he used to let the students take his daughter to lectures? Do you think that he used to let them dedicate their term papers to her? Do you think that he ever said, "Daughter, you may take your pick of these fine young scholars"?

Well, he didn't. Not once.

He used to sit evilly in his office and lean his elbows on his desk (which was, by the way, full of curious little holes) and look at whichever student it was who had knocked timidly on the door.

"Come in," he would say with a nasty smile. "I suppose you want to marry my daughter." The student would gulp and look foolish. "I have no objection, no objection at all," the professor would say, "but I love my daughter" (which was a lie) "and I want to be sure she marries a man worthy of her. I will make a small agreement with you. I will give you three tasks; if you perform them successfully, you may marry my daughter. If you fail, you must serve as my laboratory assistant for three years."

Now, when they heard this, many students used to go away and transfer to the college of Liberal Arts, for they knew how horrible a thing it was to fall into the clutches of this old and evil professor as a lab assistant, for these poor young men spent three dreary years doing nothing at all but fractional distillations; and many of them used to throw themselves off the mountain on which the famous university stood and tumble splash! into the sea.

But some used to stand firmly in the doorway and say, "I accept the conditions."

Then the professor used to chuckle happily indeed, for he was always running out of laboratory assistants. "The first task," he would say, "is to bring me a lock of hair from the

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". . . an old and evil professor of chemistry."

head of the dean." Now, this was difficult, for the dean was bald. "The second task is to get an A in my course in chemical Thermodynamics 268b." Now, this was impossible, for the old and evil professor had never given an A in the ninety-eight point six years he had been teaching. "The third task, the difficult one," he would say, smiling and sneering, "is to bring me something in which I can keep the universal solvent."

And he would reach into a cabinet and take out two test tubes full of liquid. "Name a substance, any substance," he would say, and the stu-

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dent would name a substance. And whatever substance the student named: platinum, antimony, tungsten, molybdenum, cheddar cheese; the professor would take it out of the cabinet and place it on his desk.

"Look," he would say, and he would pour the contents of the two test tubes into a flask which he placed on top of whatever substance it was the student had named. The mixture would bubble and bobble and seethe and wheeze and gurgle and gulp and go whoosh! right through the bottom of the flask and right on through the substance (whatever it was) and right through the desk and right through the floor and through the basement and through the granite mountain on which the university stood and it would go right on down through the bedrock, and if you looked long enough and hard enough, you would see daylight at the other end of the hole and maybe some Chinamen looking back at you in a puzzled way, for it was indeed the universal solvent and it would eat right through the earth and come out on the other side.

"See?" the professor would say.

And the poor student would go away, but none of them ever got a hair from the head of the dean, though the dean was a sympathetic man and would have helped if he could; and none ever got an A from the professor, for the professor himself saw to that; and none of them ever found anything in which to keep the universal solvent, though they tried many ingenious things.

It was tough.

And all this time the professor's beautiful daughter used to sit in her room and sigh long sighs. She never wept, for she was too wonderful a girl to weep, but she used to sigh, and she feared that she would become an old maid, for she was already eighteen.

Now, there was one student in the school whom the old and evil professor disliked especially. His name was John, and he was not a king's son, but his father had once served on a jury, which is just as good. John was in love with the professor's daughter and she was in love with him. She used to look out of her window and see him running to classes (he was nearly always late) and she loved him because he was so lovable. There was surely no other reason, for he was somewhat ugly and had a big adam's apple and flapping ears and a silly grin and a hole in his sweater and one term he had flunked Mechanical Engineering 639-ff (Theory and Use of the T Square). He was a nice guy.

So one day John showed up at the professor's office and knocked on the door. "Come in, John," said the professor with a sneer, "I suppose you want to marry my daughter."

"That may be," said John, "and that may not be. Save your breath for I already know your conditions, and here is a lock of hair from the

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head of the dean."

The evil old professor took the lock of hair and his hand shook, for no student had ever been able to do even this much before.

"How did you get this?" he asked. "The dean is bald."

"Perhaps I will tell you and perhaps I won't," said John, for he knew how these things should be said, "and perhaps the dean's wife gave it to me from a locket which she wears around her neck. She clipped it from his head ninety-eight point six years ago, when he had hair."

The professor cursed a curse which made two copies of "De Re Metallica" fall from the shelf. "You'll never get an A in Chemical Thermodynamics 268b," he said.

"Perhaps I won't and perhaps I will and perhaps I already did," said John. "Look at this transcript of my record. You gave me an A last term."

"I never did," screamed the professor and he looked wildly through his records. "Here it is. I gave you an F. Look here. See? The other line is where a fly walked across the paper while the ink was wet."

"Ah," said John, "but that other line makes it look like an A; a rather distorted A perhaps, but nevertheless an A."

"I'll have it changed. I'll have it changed immediately."

"Perhaps you will and perhaps you won't, but the registrar is my second cousin twice removed and he won't let you change it."

"Look here," said the professor, and his voice shook, "Can you find something to keep my universal solvent in?"

John slumped. "I had hoped you might let me off that one. That's hard."

"Can you? Can you?"

"No."

"Ha!" shouted the old and evil professor.

John's ears flapped despondently. "How much time do I have?"

"Three days. Three little days. Not a minute, not a second, not a millimicrosecond more."

"Oh."

"Well said. Now get out. I think you'll make a fine laboratory assistant."

One whole day passed and John hadn't found anything.

Another whole day passed and still John hadn't found anything.

And on the third day, as he approached the edge of the high mountain to throw himself plop! into the sea, he heard a voice calling his name, "John, John," and he knew that it was the professor's daughter. Now, he had never heard her voice before, but he was in love, so he knew who was calling him.

"John, John, climb up to my window," she cried, and he climbed up to her window, using the ivy which covered the walls of the old and famous university.

"John, have you thought of anything?"

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"Nothing," he said. "I am going to throw myself splop! into the sea."

"Don't do that," she said. "I have an idea." And she told him her idea. "Do you think it will work?"

"Yes!" he cried. "Yes!" And he let go of the ivy to kiss her so he fell three stories to the ground, but he was in love so he didn't get hurt. "I'll be right back," he shouted. "If it works I'll be right back." He ran off, hopping over hedges, until he reached the office of the old and evil professor.

"Come in," the professor said. "Have you given up?"

"Fiddle-dee-dee," said John, who seldom swore, "Just you get out your old solution and I'll show you what to keep it in."

The evil old professor laughed his nastiest laugh when he heard this, for he knew that his universal solvent would eat right through everything.

"Very well," he said. "Here you are. Where is your container?"

"May I have a cake of ice?"

"Ice?"

"Ice."

The professor reached into his cabinet, and it was indeed a large and well-stocked cabinet, and took out a cake of ice.

"And a soldering iron?"

He took out a soldering iron. "What do you expect to do with this rubbish?"

"Watch and see." John waited for the iron to become hot, then ssssss! he melted a cavity into the ice.

"OK," he said. "Let's go. Mix your stuff over that hole."

The professor poured the liquids from the two test tubes into the flask. They fizzled and sizzled and fell flop! through the bottom of the flask and into the cavity in the ice and went ssssss! through the ice a little way and stopped dead, frozen.

"Oh, my," said the professor, "that isn't fair."

"Perhaps it isn't and perhaps it is," said John, "but when it's frozen it can't dissolve anything and I am going to marry your daughter tomorrow."

"But it's not a solvent any more," said the professor, and he stuck his finger down into the hole and poked the frozen solution and it thawed a bit and went ssssss! and dissolved his fingernail. "Drat," said the professor.

"You can come to the wedding if you want," said John.

The professor argued himself blue in the face and black in the face and green in the face (and very evil and ugly he looked with a green face) but there was nothing he could do.

And so John sent the lock of hair back to the dean's wife to treasure because he didn't have any left, and he let the registrar, who was his second cousin twice removed, be the best man when he married the professor's daughter, and everybody lived happily ever after. Almost everybody, anyway, for the poor laboratory assistants went right on doing fractional distillations.

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ACT of GOD

(*Conclusion*)

By Richard Ashby

They had just two short weeks to discover the secret of David Ganley's immortality and prevent the Disciples from gaining control of the precious elixir—and the world.

(*Summary of Part I*)

WHEN Father Marek, General Peters and Ginny Harris were kidnapped by a mysterious gang, Simon Letona, strolling along a mountain road, knew about it. But Andrew Smith was not strolling, he was fleeing. When he finally reached sanctuary, he told Martha North the grim truth; he and Carla had been captured by the Ganleys. Carla had sold her life dearly; he had been tortured and given truth serum in an effort to get information from him. But the antidote, taken beforehand, had worked. He'd found himself alone with the Ganley psychiatrist, had killed him and escaped. Now they were after him. But he'd found out one big fact—Thea Ganley was running the new cult, the "Disciples".

Recently discharged from the air force on a frameup, Leslie North found himself approached by one of the Disciples, a Thane named Brenner Hunt. Impressed with the Thane's proposition, Leslie consented to join the Order. He felt that a new religion, based on logic and constructive action, was a good thing. He did not know that the Thane was actually looking for his sister, whom he hadn't seen in years, with intent to kill.

Reporting back to Thea Ganley, Hunt reserves the information that he has a clue as to where Martha can be found—he is angling for a promotion, and . . . immortality! But Thea suspects, has him drugged, and gets the truth from him. She tells him he will find Martha in two weeks, or die.

After hypno-conditioning, Father Marek, General Peters and Ginny Harris are released—Father Marek to return to his Catholic church and to preach the new religion; General Peters to further the cult's aims in Washington; Ginny to popularize it via the airwaves.

It had all begun with old David Ganley. He'd been a buffalo hunter. In 1874, at the age of 32, he rescued

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a Cheyenne Indian from drowning and as a reward, had received an elixir, which preserved his youth until now, 1980. Thea Ganley, his sister, wanted the secret of the elixir's chemistry so that it could be duplicated; so did Martha North and her group. But the two factions had different reasons. Thea wanted it for her own selfish group, to enable them to rule the world; Martha and her companions, including some philanthropic scientists, wanted it for its benefits to all mankind. David Ganley had joined Martha's group with the remaining elixir and was aiding them in trying to break down its composition.

Martha becomes aware of her brother's action, knows the Thanes framed him from the air force to get both his electronic knowledge and his sister, so that they can locate the elixir. She contacts him at a library, tells him her story. He agrees to work with her, inside the Thane organization.

Now the cult is narrowing down the search for Martha's group and their immovable analysis machinery. They have two weeks at the most. They have enough elixir to run one more test. If it fails, the chance of the secret of immortality will be lost. The mathematics is 93.8% worked out, with the remaining 6.2% possibility of error. If they had time to work the formulae out fully . . . but they must take the chance now or never.

After the rendezvous with her brother, Martha North is followed by a heliocopter containing four Thanes. Andrew Smith, also following, in his role as guardian, sees them. He warns Martha by radio, then crashes his heliocopter into that of the Thanes in a suicidal sacrifice.

Now go on with the story:

Part 2

Conclusion

IN his hotel room, North hung up the new tweed suit and standing in shorts and shoes, studied the tiny kit his sister had given him. "Anti-hypno," she'd called it. He examined the cloudy fluid against the light, wondering if she'd meant it worked against both hypnotism and against drug-inspired obedience, or only the latter. Probably the latter. No need in this fair new age to make the olden passes, the soft-spoken suggestions.

He put it back in the locked case. Three or four doses, she'd said. Standard equipment: Gun, drug, anti-drug, and a new set of morals. He still felt shamefully naive.

He had a drink, but not as much as he'd been downing, and pulled on the Disciple habit. Already he thought of it as uniform, so accustomed was he to wearing one after three years of Air Corps. And maybe now he had a chance to get back in. Not simply because he enjoyed being brass, but because there were a couple score people he had busi-

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ness with—the pasty-faced non-coms of the detention barracks; the smug, rude clerk at the mustering-out office; the two men who had sworn their lies against him. Those last two, mostly.

But first things first.

He belted the robe over his hard stomach, pocketed the kit, then locked up and left the hotel. The Disciples expected him at the Sunland headquarters in a few minutes. A big show was coming up, something semi-public, he'd heard, and it just might be a good chance to have his first open-eyed look around.

He had been correctly informed. The cabby had a hard time finding space to let him out, so busy were the parking shafts. Ships from all over the coast were landing, and certainly half the cabs in the county. Something really big.

North entered by a private door and was immediately confronted by none other than Brenner Hunt.

"Brother Leslie," he exclaimed taking the man's arm. "You're late. I've been waiting to introduce you to our speaker. Come along."

North fought down the impulse to smash his fist into the other's suave face, or to at least shake off the repugnant clutch of the bony hand. He let himself be led along unfamiliar aisles and corridors in the labyrinthine building, and eventually into the backstage area of the huge auditorium. Downstairs, they entered a "green room" and made their way through a circle of chattering admirers, both Disciples and lay. The center of this attention was a dazzling handsome young woman with a cascade of bright red hair and a brilliant wide smile to match, seductively gowned in pale green velvet.

"Miss Harris," said Hunt, "allow me to present a distinguished new Brother. Leslie North. Les, Ginny Harris."

Les took the cool white hand in his own. "Hello," he said. "I wondered what the attraction was tonight. You've been something of a scare to the rest of the world. The papers had it you were either kidnapped, or newly eloped. Which was it?" Brenner Hunt met his eyes briefly. They were hard behind their wrinkle of smile.

For a second the woman's famous face went troubled. Then she smiled slowly. "Neither, Thane North. You'll hear all about it in a few minutes. I'm their prize exhibit. I'll be telling the whole story. Pigeon gets religion . . . something like that." Her mocking grin was the same one he'd seen many times on film and on teevy. And if it hadn't been for Martha's guess about Ginny Harris he would have been convinced.

"My hand, Thane," Ginny said.

"Oh." He let her go. "Sorry."

"Come along now, North. I'll introduce you to the Red Thane who's going to officiate tonight. I don't think you've met him. Miss Harris . . . "

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"Certainly." She waved them away. "See you later on, North." The admiring circle parted to let them through, closed back around the vivid woman.

"WELL, what do you think of our new convert?" The Thane halted before another "green room."

"What?" North hadn't heard. He was too busy being afraid to enter this new door. Something warned him that the Thane knew . . . something in the man's narrow eyes, his proprietary grip on his elbow, his very sureness . . . . "Oh, Miss Harris. Yes. Why, she's probably the most stunning woman in California."

Brenner—Hunt chuckled. "She thinks you're quite the guy, too. She saw your picture on the scroll of new Thanes. Made us tell all about you. I wouldn't be at all surprised if she could go for you. You know how she is . . . impulsive, stubborn, generous . . . ."

Again their eyes met; Hunt's dark and mocking. North's mirroring anger and confusion, and . . . he admitted it, fright of the door before which they stood.

"She's quite a dish of atoms, Brother. Nice."

He got it then. Ginny Harris was being put on the block for him. Bribe. You give us your sister, we give you the lovely Miss Harris who is all "conditioned" to adore you. He stepped back from the man. "Look, Brenner, I don't feel up to meeting the higher-ups just now. Couldn't I beg off till later? Till after the show?"

Hunt appeared to consider this. "If you like," he said nodding. "I'll meet you right here afterwards. Bring Miss Harris with you. There's going to be a little party upstairs. Just a few of the elect. In Miss Harris' apartments, I might add. She's . . . uh, moved in with us for the nonce."

It was all Les could do to control himself. Sure, he'd been a champion jerk, but how stupid did they think him to be?

The elect, indeed!

He nodded, turned and almost ran from the hall.

Outside, standing on the grill of a small fire escape, he had a cigarette and got himself under control. Through the thick walls and door behind him came the filtered noise of music, of applause. He could be moving now.

He let himself down the iron ladder, rather than return backstage, and crossed the grounds to the smaller auditorium where the "miracles" had taken place a week or so ago. The guard there let him pass unchallenged.

Inside he learned several interesting things. The discoveries no longer shamed him . . . he'd *had* that already, but he did marvel abstractedly at the completeness of his gullibility. The simple electromagnetic field, for instance, that allowed a

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metal-laden "mystic" to levitate: Clever how they had mounted it beneath the floor, and ingenious their method of amplifying it. And the bank of subsonic broadcasters . . . no wonder he and all the other sheep had felt a "spiritual quickening," a sense of "astral communion."

Some of the equipment he could not decipher. With these he contented himself with jerking loose a wire here, crossing a bare circuit there. And not until he was through with his gentle pillage did he understand the step he had taken: Martha be damned; he wasn't the phlegmatic stuff of which undercover lads were made. He was too easily angered, too inclined to blow. And anyway the tote board in his brain was giving ten to one that the Thane knew *he* knew.

By another door he left the lecture hall and wandered down a flight of dim concrete stairs.

More revelations awaited: The workrooms and the labs were dusty props. The banks of high-tension equipment cool from days of inactivity, the powerful centrifuge at rest.

Hall after hall and room after room taught him. And his greatest anger became not so much the fact that deception had been practiced upon him, but that the Disciples, with their power and their resources *could* have been engaged upon such a splendid quest as he'd been led to believe.

HE came to a locked gate that barred entrance to a darkened descent. Applying simple leverage to the grille, he snapped the hinges and wandered down the echoing way. At the last landing an auto-thermal switch noticed him and turned on the lights. He found himself contemplating a row of cells. The first three were occupied with miserable creatures, each in Disciple garb, who eyed him with hatred and fawning servility. The fourth contained a bandaged, but bloody man who stretched across the dank floor.

"Who's this?" He demanded answer from the nearest Disciple prisoner.

"A layman, sir. He was brought in just this evening. An hour or so ago."

North studied the inert figure. Brown hair, splotched with red and with blond . . . odd! The blood, yes, but the other color . . . He twisted his head, managed to look in at an angle. Somewhere he'd seen this man. And recently.

"Who is he?"

The creature in the cell shrugged.

"How do you call the guard?"

"We have buttons in the cells. I'll call him for you if you like, but he'll be very angry with me. You'll have to take the responsibility, sir."

"Never mind." Leslie North reached through into the wounded man's cubby and pressed the button near the grilled door. Faintly he heard a gong sound somewhere further down.

This man was either Andrew

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Smith, despite his oddly different appearance, or his brother. Either way . . .

A jovial looking brother padded onto the scene. "Yes, Thane?"

North saw the hidden lines of cruelty that lived beneath his laughter wrinkles. "This fellow, who is he?"

"You called me out to ask that? I was in the woman's wing." His voice was petulant, but with a rasp of dangerous annoyance.

"I did! Look at him closely. Someone has taken his place. It's a Red Thane in there now, if I'm not mistaken."

The slob's eye dilated in horror and he bent his head to the bars for a closer look. "I don't think . . ." That was all he managed to get out before he stopped thinking. North's hard right hand ached from the blow against the warder's fat neck. Swiftly he searched the recumbant man's robes, brought out from his pockets a smudged set of dirty pictures, an old Colt, and a key. The gun went into his own pocket, the key fitted the lock, the pictures he placed carefully on the other's enormous rump.

"Smith. Hey, Smith! Wake up."

A groan escaped from the recumbent man's battered lips.

"Come on, fellow, you're ok. Can you get up?"

The man opened his eyes. "North?"

"Right. We're getting out of here. Can you make it?"

Swiftly, the other pulled himself erect. "You're damned right," he whispered. "Been lying doggo. What's the picture?"

North told him.

"I dunno. Sound's pretty easy, but we can't stop to fret about that. What allowed you to make it down here?"

As they left the cell, North told the other about the big spectacle that had drawn every available staffer in the building.

"Ginny Harris, huh? Poor gal."

"We'll get her out too." As the words left his lips, North found how amazed he could make himself.

"You will, huh? Well bully for you! How?"

"Never mind the sarcasm. I'll take care of it." And his anger, his frustration and rage that had not really ended since the day of the frame-up, and the weight of the gun in his robes . . . they told him that somehow he could, he could. Together, North and Smith slid up the dark stairs toward the ground level.

Les took out the gun, slipped it off safety.

"You wouldn't happen to have another, would you?"

"Nope."

"Then let's get one. Where's the nearest guard?"

"We don't dare."

"The hell you say, North. Come on."

IT was surprisingly simple. They walked up to the first guard,

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North produced his automatic, and when the man's hands were in the air, Smith laid him out with a bone-jarring crack that hurt North to hear.

"And a ship, pal. Where's the parking lot? Roof or grounds?"

"Not the roof, I think. It's all turrets and towers. But what about a key? He led the way into another hallway, found it empty and beckoned Smith on.

"Ignition?" For answer, the bandaged man held up his two bruised and scratched hands and smiled. "Just find us a ship, pal. That's all."

They emerged from the building finally, found themselves on a grassy knoll that overlooked the somnolent parking lot. North explained the layout—where the auditorium exit was, where he'd seen armed parking attendants, and from which door he'd emerge.

The other nodded, then pointed out the craft he wanted. "The new Hiller there. I know it's conspicuous, but it's probably the fastest job on the field. And it's near your exit. ok?"

"Right. So long. Give me . . . oh, fifteen minutes."

A burst of applause sounded, grew and thundered. "That's the end, I think. Here goes."

Without a word, Smith turned and raced for the row of nearby coptors.

North took a deep breath and began climbing the metal ladder back up to the slatted fire-escape platform. So he was going to get Ginny Harris out, was he? Bully, as Smith had said. Good for him. Brave and clever and cold.

But how, actually?

He gained the landing. The applause from within the building was beginning to fade.

He swung open the door into the greater volume of sound, onto the dim twinkle of backstage lights. Ginny Harris' voice floated up to him through the fading tumult.

" . . . ever so much. But just one more, then. It's called 'Eden and Margaret Sanger.' It's not nice, but it's funny. So here goes, friends."

A piano began tinkling as North put his foot on the first rung. As he descended he heard the woman's clear rich voice bringing forth the risque lyrics. He gripped the comforting butt of the gun, put one cautious foot before the other down the flight. The new approach, he found himself thinking. Not only the loaves and the fish, but the floor show as well. The benediction and the bawdy, the bed and the blessing.

Despite himself, a cool portion of his mind detached and became commentator and observer: It wasn't so much *what* they did; he had utterly no objection to honesty and a popular religion getting together, but it was *who* did it. These people defiled even honest lust. They didn't deserve to live.

Some of them wouldn't, he suspected.

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He reached the oiled wooden floor and crept toward a group waiting in the wings. There was a very old and very fat woman in the group. Around her were clustered three Red Thanes, two lay people, and Brenner Hunt.

His lips tightened against his teeth.

" . . . away from the Garden, begging your pardon, Maggy teach me the trick."

Her song had ended, he knew. He'd heard it last year in Port Said. Last year in the Air Corps. He half removed the gun from his pocket, and with a tight smile he approached the group in the wings, planning to wait with them till Ginny Harris came off stage, then ad lib his way from there.

HE didn't get the chance, though. Brenner Hunt saw to that. It was rotten luck, and North never knew what made the man happen to take his eyes from the performer on stage and look around. He stared at North for fully ten seconds, then spoke to the Red Thane beside him. North produced the gun and beckoned to the two Thanes. Quite docilely enough they came over, their bodies now shielding sight of the gun from the others in the group. When the two were a few feet away, Les stopped them as a great burst of handclapping signalled that Ginny Harris was taking her leave from the stage.

"You'll never get out, you know, North," said Hunt over the thunder of applause. "There are too many of us here. Better put away the gun and we'll forget all about it."

He didn't bother to answer Hunt, for Ginny Harris had come into the wings and was receiving the adulation of the remaining group there.

"And she won't go with you, North. She's become ours, remember?"

He had remembered. The fingers of his left hand were holding the hypodermic ready in his pocket, but how to make the woman let him use it! One couldn't very well say, pardon me, Miss Harris, but you're higher than the moon, and I've a drug here that'll bring you down.

Hardly.

Ginny Harris looked from the Thane talking to her and saw North. She smiled, waved her hand. Without thinking, Les waved back with the hand that held the gun. Ginny frowned, her smile of greeting changed to a quizzical little grin of puzzlement. She said something to the Red Thane and left, began walking toward North. As she passed Brenner Hunt, the Thane grabbed her and using her for a shield, roared for help. The Red Thane by his side hiked his robe and began groping for his hip pocket. North snapped a quick shot into the man's leg, then ran to the struggling Ginny Harris. The girl was a poor choice for a shield; very non-cooperative she was, and her violent fighting and biting and kicking was giving Brenner Hunt a rough time. As he

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saw North coming, he hurled the girl away and dove to the floor. The dive became a roll, and Hunt came up holding a gun.

Before North could bring his arm around a shot sounded, not the Thane's gun, but from high up behind him. Brenner Hunt's mouth opened, his eyes rolled, and he slumped back to the floor, an ugly dark mushy area showing at the back of his head.

North hadn't time to wonder about the man, for Ginny Harris was streaking to the rear of the stage. He put a warning shot over the heads of the dazed group at the wings, and raced after her. She tripped suddenly, almost throwing him, looked up with a wild expression of hatred and bewilderment and fear at the man who lunged at her with a glittering needle in one hand and a smoking gun in the other.

Two reports crashed as one behind him, and he felt the hot whine of the slug past his ear.

Things were moving too fast to argue, so he stuffed the gun into his pocket and clipped her neatly on the chin. His left hand inserted the needle into her arm and pushed the plunger even as he felt her sag. Slinging the inert woman over his shoulder—no easy job, for she was a lot of woman—North grabbed out the gun again and faced the group clustered in the wings. How to get back through them, he asked desperately, but there were too many there to fight, and more would be arriving at any second. He became conscious, as he staggered forward, of the rising cries of alarm and confusion that were coming from the audience. He'd have to move faster than this. There'd be a thousand people in here damn soon.

"Take your time, brother, take your time." Andrew Smith's voice! "Up here. I'll cover you."

Bless the man! North devoted his energies and attentions to the stairs, past the curious, the dazed, the moaning Thane on the floor who clutched his shattered thigh. Somehow Les managed to get himself and his burden up the stairs.

Smith patted his back as he went past and out into the blessed night. There was a crashingly loud sound behind him from the man's gun, another, then the door slammed and the three were together.

"You hit, son?"

North shook his head. "Thanks."

"Better let me take her now. You're winded."

GINNY Harris spoke, startling them both . . . the anti had taken hold. "Never mind, lads. I'm still a trifle mixed up, but I gather that the general idea is we're all leaving." She slid down from North's shoulder. "Which way?"

Smith indicated the coptor with the open door. They pushed down the clattering iron stairway as pounding came from the fire door above.

"How'd you do that?" North panted the question as they reached the

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grass and turned.

"Slammed it on my comb. It's jammed."

A slug whined harmlessly past them.

"Roof, huh?" Smith threw a shot there as he spoke. They were only yards from the waiting coptor now, but a strip of brightly lighted path had to be crossed. Irrelevantly, North noticed that the girl running beside him was shoeless. "Ready?" he asked her.

"Yes."

And they were over and into the cabin. Les made to reach for the controls but she grabbed them. "I'm here already. I'm Ok."

With a last wild fusillade of shots, Smith piled into the ship beside North. He reached beneath the dash and the starter whirred as his fingers twisted a connection. Ginny revved up, then let out the clutch. The flat blades angled, bit air, and the big craft jumped into the night, weighting them with acceleration. As they slid up over the building they'd just left, a monstrous "whoosh!" let go behind them and the world turned a nasty orange hue.

"Ye Gods! What's that?"

"Gas," said Smith, a trifle smugly. "While waitin' for you I roamed around draining tanks onto the concrete. Just before we got going I lit a newspaper fuse. Lots of nice ships going up. 'Shame."

"You're quite the boy, aren't you," commented the girl as she whipped the heavy machine over an onrushing tower, then down the shadowy side of the Disciple headquarters.

"Yup," he told her. "Smith's the name. And don't go that way, honey. Better head for the coast."

NOT until they were well over the Santa Barbara Islands did Smith have the girl change course. Then they headed North-northeast into the Bakersfield region, planning to enter the San Bernardino mountain area by the back door.

Ginny Harris refused to let them land her somewhere. "I've been gone so long already that the public's probably forgotten me. A few more days fun and games won't matter. Besides, I'm determined to drag the whole story out of somebody. I couldn't die happy without knowing what the hell has been going on." She turned a rueful gaze on North and rubbed her bruised chin. "Next time let's make it wrestling. Two falls out of three."

North murmured idiotically that that would be fine. He was quite certain he was blushing.

RAIN was falling. They could hear it against the roof and gurgling from spouts outside as they sat before the fireplace and waited.

The entire lodge was waiting. Everyone, that is, save Dr. Matthews and his crew. And even they could do little else than watch, make small adjustments in the dial settings, and go on watching.

Two men waited in readiness be-

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side the faithful power generator, ready to throw in a powerful Holtz emergency circuit in case of motor failure.

Guards waited at windows within the lodge, and in cars spotted at muddy forks.

The chemists and biologists waited near their tank of sleeping half-life, the synthetic protoplasm that would test the formula when it was analyzed and reproduced. When and if.

Three days to go.

Night came and the rain softened to a sprinkle. Men and women ate, slept, worked in accelerated schedule . . . the lucky ones, that is; the ones with a definite job to do. But for North and Ginny Harris, David Ganley, the new man—Simon Letona, and over half of the rest, there was not enough to do, no possible way to help. Nothing to do.

The dissecting beams could not be hurried.

By eight the rain stopped, and a three-quarter moon emerged from the scudding clouds. Martha reported this as she entered the quiet warm lounge. "Why couldn't it have kept up for just a couple more days. Why! Now the Disciples will come crawling from their rocks and begin another camp-meeting. And by midnight the whole bloody country will be swarming with beaters again. Pray for rain, folks."

Ginny sighed glumly. "For the first time in my life I wish I didn't have such a rowdy reputation . . . I suppose if I swore out a kidnapping warrant against the cult they'd produce a hundred witnesses to swear they saw me drunk and disorderly in Tijuana for the past week."

"That's about it, Ginny," said Martha. "But it isn't your past that'd do it. They'd discredit old General Peters if we managed to undrug him, even Father Marek. Besides, the business of charge and countercharge takes too long to be effective now. We're worried about a matter of days and hours."

Chin in hands, Ginny frowned into the flickering hearth. "I suppose. But I can't take much more of this waiting. Isn't there something I could do?"

Martha shook her head.

"Then what about my going out with a guard on patrol. Even that would be better than nothing. I could keep the poor man company."

"Too much distraction." Andrew Smith had entered and was pulling on his gloves. "But if you like, why don't you come along with me. You too, North. I want to wander up to the top of Bone Ridge and get a look at their camp meeting. ok?"

The two gladly agreed, and after receiving their precautionary anti-shots, they pulled on heavy clothing and accompanied Smith out into the dark wet forest that surrounded the lodge.

TWICE on their way to the Ridge path, they were forced to take cover as bands of Disciple members, each led by a robed Thane, went

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past on their errands of search. "The noose is getting tighter," Smith remarked. "Their patrols are increasing in numbers as they narrow the perimeter. Frankly, I wouldn't give a plugged kopeck for the chances of our lasting two more days. They're plenty mad about having their big headquarters burnt down."

As the three wound their way up the rutted path they became aware of the growing murmur of sound and music from the valley beyond the ridge. And as they neared the top they could see the camp's glow reflected on the lowering sky.

Smith brought them to a halt and led them off the trail into the pines. "It's entirely possible," he whispered, "that they have some of their people on top here. I'm going up and look around, so wait until I whistle for you." Before they could protest he was gone. About three minutes passed as they listened to muted babble of the distant crowd and organ. Ginny, quite unused to the woods, imagined she heard things.

She slipped her arm through his, moved closer. "I dunno, Monsters, creaping beasties. Silly of me."

"Not at all." Les held the woman closer. "I hear 'em too. But I also see things."

"Where!"

"Oh, never straight ahead, but little flickers out of the corners of my eyes. That's what city living does to one."

For a few charged moments they stood silent, close. Then Ginny whispered, "Do you want to live forever? I used to always be afraid of growing old, losing my looks, but after seeing that pathetic David Ganley and talking with him, I don't know. I think I'd rather live good and hard and short, and not long and little."

Les nodded down at the oval shimmer of her face. Even in the darkness their eyes managed to meet. They found themselves forgetting the world, drawing closer.

Andy's soft whistle made them jump apart.

"Damn," Ginny whispered. "I feel like mother had just come upstairs. Raincheck?"

"Raincheck."

THE sight that met their eyes a few minutes later as they stared down over the lip of the cliff was one each knew he'd never forget. Even Leslie North who had helped set up the spectacle found it difficult to believe that a few thousand dollars worth of lights and slides could produce such a tumult of color. The sharp sides of the mountains that ringed the camp grounds on three sides were bathed in a riot of shifting reds and blues and bad greens—excitement colors, he told the other two. And the speaker's stage seemed to hang above the invisible earth, floating on clouds of gold and purple. A single mauve beam emerged from behind the stage and lanced up at the face of the rock wall, picking out with dramatic

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lengthened shadows and light the console of the organ perched there and the hunched cowled figure of the player who was making low rumbles of bass music reverberate in the rocky confines of the camp. From time to time a hidden choir would chant sweetly, savagely with the organ, and the massed congregation would shout its response.

"I'm no kid," Smith stated, "but that pageant down there has brought out my gooseflesh. Look." He held his arm out for inspection, pulled back the sleeve. It was true, but not unique, for both Ginny and North were experiencing the same thing.

"Part of it is sonics, so don't feel too impressionable. There's a battery of amplifiers aimed down into the bowl from the ridge just across from us," North pointed into the darkness. "I know. I helped wire it in, but at the time they told me it was an experimental P.A. rig. I wouldn't want to be around when they start to really push waves through those babies. They've got men who can play those little crystals like a musician, make you think you're just outside heaven or deep in the jungle."

"Wouldn't it help to smash them?" Ginny asked.

Both men shook their heads. "Not worth the risk," Smith told her. "They could fix them or replace them in a few minutes. Nope. What we need is something big. An earthquake, a blizzard. An act of God. We need it bad."

AN act of God.

It was an hour later, but North couldn't get the words out of his mind. With unseeing eyes he sat in an out-of-the-way corner of the lab while the grimly calm technicians labored with the analyzer.

How does one fight a religion?

Governments have legislated against them with varying degrees of failure.

A few philosophers have set their individual brands of logic against them . . . and here and there in the facade of some creed or cult a crack appeared or a tower fell.

But laws and logic take time to have their effect. And for every person swayed by edict or armed trooper or syllogism there are ten who are not. There are those who go underground to conduct their litany, and there are others who go beneath the appeal of their logic and finger their symbology in answer to the stronger appeals. And there are those who willingly die to worship.

Man must worship. He always had, he probably always would.

So obviously the answer was to give the disciples another religion.

Sure. Simple.

North looked at the lab clock—ten-fifteen. Hours and hours yet to work, and even now there were two suspicious Disciple fanatics in the lounge, ostensibly drinking and chatting, but of course only checking. It would have been folly to turn them away, to plead a temporary shutdown for remodeling or to insist the

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lodge was a members only affair. Any such move would bring a squad of inflamed worshipers and Thanes. Through a peephole of one-way glass behind the bar, North had watched worriedly as off-duty members of the lodge group played at being vacationers before the two Disciple snoops.

An act of God . . .

He put a cigarette between his lips and lit it. Across the lab, Dr. Matthews was blinking his tired eyes at the dials of the analyzer. He looked up, caught North's gaze and smiled wearily. North got up and went to watch.

"How's it coming, Doctor?"

The man shrugged. "All I can say is that it is coming to an end, one way or another. In two days we'll have either a means of prolonging man's life indefinitely, or a stinking little box of goo."

"Would it bother you if I asked how you came to discover this . . . this method of analysis? I'm Cal Tec, '71, but I'm damned if there's anything familiar about this rig." His nod indicated the banks of lenses that protruded from what appeared to be the innards of an electronic computer. Lenses which stared at the precious box of hardened elixir from four sides, top and bottom. "That's an old Analogue Computer, isn't it?"

Matthews said that it was, but that it served no function at present other than to hold some guns at the proper height.

"Guns?"

"Emitters, then. We simply tacked them onto whatever was handy. That's a computer there, hooked into it is a defunct nobatron, and this cabinet is a perfectly good radio-player. They just happened to be here, so we used them." He broke off to take another check of the dials, then accepting a cigarette from North, briefly described the new analyzer. In theory, the idea was simple. Simple beams of every known particle of matter — electron, protrons, neutrons, and the six recently discovered particles—were fed into the elixir. "Listening devices" added their feelers, testing and measuring the quanta of the area affected. As this "putting and taking" went on, the crystalline remains of the elixir was subjected to a full octave of possible response frequencies

AS nearly as North could understand, the fierce vibratory experience isolated particular portions of the elixir at a time, and tuned to follow these responses was the sweeping probe of the guns. Each gun was lowed to take the time it needed to build its report . . . a statement of the number and type of particles answering to its bombardment. And further, and more surprising to Les, the beams counted only when they intersected, were in operation only at those incredible mili-seconds when each tiny lancing encountered a full complement of other beams. The result, explained Matthews, was to construct, mathematically of course,

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a perfect three-dimensional picture of the baffling X-factor's structure down to the last orbiting electron and particle.

"And what of those particles near the outer edge of the crystal? Your picture will never be accurate because of radiation loss. How do you get around that?"

Matthews grimaced, then managed a patient smile. "I thought I pointed out that we are concerned with a central area of the elixir—a collection of atoms no larger than . . . than the tell-tale structure of soapy water."

"I see." About twelve percent of it, North did. The rest . . . He shook his head in tribute to genius. "And how did you happen onto this?"

"As with most discoveries it was half accidental. I had a young assistant who in his off-duty hours was fooling around with a matter transmitter. You know, one of those lab toys that no one has ever gotten to behave in a practical or useful manner. But this boy was concerning himself with the transmission of photons. He was studying a diagram out of the random machine."

Les cocked a questioning gaze. "Out of the what?"

"Another toy. An overgrown typewriter, calculator, blueprint machine, and roulette wheel in one. It takes a few parent circuit ideas, then prints you others . . . most of them impossible. So you type in what you cannot have, and what you want, spin the wheel, and set it to printing again. Well, this fellow came up with one print that bore an odd similarity to the ordinary three-dimension tele receiver assembly chamber. But this diagram looked as if a closed circuit, with a feedback, might either send itself right out of existence, or might handle four or five separate bunches of guns . . . such as we're now doing. As it happened, it didn't do either. Just smoked and projected an image of itself a foot into the air, but the utter alienness of the circuit fascinated me. Eventually we were able to adapt its new kinks into the piece-by-piece matter analyzer."

. . . a picture of itself a foot into the air.

North recalled something.

. . . an act of God.

"Is that assistant free just now?"

. . . . give the Disciples another religion.

THE young man's name was East, oddly enough, and between them they constructed their rig in six hours. Twice, then, it blew, but by dawn they had what North wanted. All that remained now was to round up a powerful amplifier, write the script, and settle the slight problem of casting. North's helper worked out that detail.

"There's a new guy around, a laborer, who's just the man. Wait till you see him. Name's Letona. Simon Letona. We call him Simple Simon because he's so sort of good natured and unquestioning. I'll get him."

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A few minutes later Letona was brought in.

North agreed: He suited the role perfectly; that is, he satisfied North. They'd have to chance it that North's concept of the role was more or less in accord with the popular one.

"Simon, would you go over against the window and stand with your back to the light?"

"Certainly, Mr. North." The morning sun cast a nimbus of light about the slender figure, softening and suffusing in silhouette the man's work-stained garments, highlighting the laborer's gentle and dignified carriage.

Young East was awed. "He looks almost like God."

"Almost? He's got to do better than that. What would you suggest?"

"I dunno, but I thought God wore a beard. Maybe we'd better take a poll on it, but don't mention it to Matthews or Mrs. Edgars. They take their religion very seriously. Matthews might put a stop to the whole deal."

North called the workman away from the window. "Letona, does your concept of God have him with a beard?" Briefly, he sketched the caper before them.

The man smiled slightly before answering. "The popular anthropomorphic picture does, I believe, include a beard . . . a subconscious heritage stemming from the old Father fix. But it's very old and deep, and since you're going to be dealing with mere surface ideas and emotions, I suggest we eliminate the whiskers."

Others bore out Simon Letona's reasoning. But to only a few did they reveal their plan. No good building up a lot of hope in case the wild scheme failed.

"You'll need someone to fly the coptor," put in Smith. "Better make it two. One to fly, the other handling the amplifying equipment and the oxygen. We're going to want plenty of altitude with even a muffled motor. I vote that Martha and I take that job, while you and East and a couple of others handle the projection. And I'll give you some boys to scout the way for the pickup truck."

The next few hours were busy ones, and he relished the change from impotent waiting to the activity of even this fantastic gamble. With the aid of East and the two techs, the photon projector was boosted onto the bed of an old '65 surplus Weasel, and wired to a heavy block of the new A.C. batteries. Meanwhile, Martha set about creating a costume for Simon. Soon she had hemmed together a garment of Grecian simplicity—a single flowing movement of white cloth around the middle, up over one shoulder and belted about the middle. When Letona tried it on and raised his arms to test the freedom of the movement, she found herself puzzled.

Simon Letona, she wondered.

Who the devil is he? Did I ever

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pass on him as a security risk? Funny . . .

"I think this will do nicely, Miss North. You have a decided flair for extemporaneous design. Quite an artistic bent. Why don't you someday give it rein."

Martha's vague troubled fears faded. She smiled warmly. "You've seen into my secret ambition. I'm a watercolorist at heart. I paint the lousiest streams and sunsets and pines ever daubed in California. And that's an achievement, believe me."

Late afternoon came, and only the task of waiting remained.

The copter was ready. Its amplifying horns mounted and the two sets tuned.

The guards waited atop Bone Ridge.

The pickup and its load of gadgetry stood fueled and poised behind the doors of the garage.

And Simon Letona, with only two readings, memorized the script which North and Ginny Harris had written.

The curtain would rise an hour after darkness. An hour after the camp of the Disciples stirred itself and began its nocturnal drumming and rallying and inflaming.

And deep beneath the lodge, the weary Matthews and his team still picked at the elixir's stubborn secret.

NIGHT finally came, clear and cloudless, bearing with it a soft South wind.

Les, Ginny, Simon Letona, and two technicians drove quickly to the hilltop, and as the rig was being re-checked and readied, Ginny took over the phone set.

"They're having a real randy down there, Martha, Smith," she voiced to the coptor. "Looks like a premier for some new sex-opera. . . . and I should know. But here's Les. Wants to say something."

"Hello, Smith. Listen . . . I forgot to check with you on this. You know, of course, to put the projection directly between us. The horns on the coptor are pointing down and forward at forty-five so you shouldn't have much trouble sighting them. Ok. Here's Ginny."

"Hi. Martha, your boy is belting up his kimona, now. We're in a little theater of our own, with boulders all around shielding us from the camp down there. Now Simon is getting up on a high boulder not visible from the camp, and Leslie is putting cotton all over the rock at his feet. We'll be ready for the test any time. We'll send two seconds of a burning match at about sixteen-thousand feet. Got that? The cotton is all ready . . . looks like Simple Simon is standing on his own private cloud. Now North is going over to the what-cha-macallit, the gadget that'll put out the picture. They're turning it on, and . . . Ok, Les. Hey, Les is ready. You? Then here goes."

Ginny broke off to look up into the black night. Just ahead and beneath her range of vision came the

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slight glow of the match North had lighted and was holding into the four eyes of the "camera." An order was given, and there was a small arc of an exposed switch closing. Then the sky split into light as high above—almost three miles up, a huge flame danced.

North cursed and erked the match out of focus. Cries broke out in the valley of the Disciples, cries of fear and excitement, drowning out the sombre tones of the organ, cutting into the ringing echoes of the speakers.

The night darkened again, and from below, the organ climbed mightily over the dying tumult of the mob.

Ginny picked up the mike, gulped, licked her lips. "Did . . . did you see that, kids. Lordy, this is going to be a real show. Guess you can make for your altitude now. Have fun." She clicked off the mike and lighted a cigarette with nervous fingers. Letona, she mused, as she watched North and two men set up the spots that would illuminate the white-robed man.

How had Letona known to tell her she was in love with Leslie North. A funny guy, perceptive, yet not intrusive. Not at all like the run of sharp Hollywood guessers who might also have spotted her feeling for North. A real friend, this Letona, and a mighty good listener.

Ginny felt herself flush as she recalled the things she had confided to the man, the questions she had asked.

Those few moments talking with him had been like . . . like getting a fresh grip on things, like having a good rest, like seeing herself clearly again and without rancour.

Simon Letona, she ventured, was not just a laborer. Probably a skilled psychologist, a doctor maybe. Certainly a man who had lived well and wisely.

She went off into the little fantasy that had come to her often lately. She and Les were together, living somewhere far, far from Hollywood. Up in Canada, maybe. They had a cabin with a fireplace like the one in the big lodge. And they would certainly welcome Simon Letona's visits.

A voice crackled from the little speaker before her. "Ginny? Smith. We're at seventeen-thousand now. Can you have someone blink us in for a bearing?"

Les went to the weasel and swung the spot up into the sky. Ten times he sent a slender beam up into the waiting darkness before the speaker sounded again. "That's got it, I think. But just in case, suppose you have Simple Simon hold his point a few moments before speaking. That way I can make the last few thousand feet of correction I might need. Let's go. Luck, Ginny."

"Luck."

THE spotlights caught upon Letona who stood atop his rock looking down at them with an ex-

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pression of bright interest, and — Ginny decided—with some amusement.

"You remember your lines, Letona?" North spoke from the darkness behind one of the spots.

"I believe so. Are you ready?"

North glanced questioningly at the men at the projector. They nodded. "Then here goes."

Simon Letona raised his arms as if in benediction and looked down. Above them, the heavens cracked into radiance as an enormously enlarged duplicate of the man glowed into existence. For one long minute the projection of Letona smiled sadly down. Then his mouth opened and the thunderous voice rolled over the forests. "Bless you, my friends. All of you."

Ginny tore her gaze from the enormous white-robed man in the sky whose feet rested on a bank of cumulous, and looked again at the "real" Simon Letona. And although she could make out the wires that trailed from beneath his garment to the transmitter, the slight bulge beneath the roll of his collar that hid the throat mike — although Ginny clearly saw and understood the various devices of trickery responsible for the "miracle" she found herself to be fully as impressed by the nearby Letona as by his alter ego high high above them. Sincerity, power, and kindness seemed somehow to radiate from the man as he spoke.

"Do not be afraid, my friends, my children, for while I am with you no harm can come. I am your God, your friend."

From the valley began a great swelling moan. A cry in chorus from a thousand people; fear and anger and longing, the age-old hunger to identify oneself, to bow down, to curse, to flee, to beg, to sound whatever dominant chord was touched by the Presence. The cry became a confused anguished roar, utterly burying the frantic fluting and piping of the organist's efforts.

Ginny, her nails making sharp pains in her palms, her flesh chilly against this tumult of emotion, glanced at Leslie North.

Dr. Frankenstein, he was thinking. That's me. This could so easily get out of hand.

He met Ginny's gaze and shook his head in an expression of anxious helplessness.

"Be still, my children. Don't you know that each of you is loved and treasured by me? Be still, I say it."

And quiet fell over the gaudy pit beneath Bone Ridge.

The six foot Simon Letona smiled happily.

The three thousand foot double did the same.

"I am to be with you for but a few moments, and in that time there is much to say. I ask it of you that you listen well, for never again in your time on earth shall I speak to you. Do that for me. It is all I ask you now."

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THE lights went off in the camp of the Disciples, but instead of the frenzy and horror expected by North and Smith and the others who watched, a calm seemed to settle there. And in answer to Letona's request came a murmur of acquiescense.

"Then hear me. Each of you I know, my children. Your name, your face, your heart. And for each of you I have only one love, even for those of you who now are cursing my presence, cowering as you are behind your machinery of deception and your fear of life. To these few also I say, be not afraid. Be not afraid and hear me.

"You call yourselves "The Disciples." You are met here to sing and make your joyful noises and listen to your leaders and, for the most, are rewarded with some happiness. Only a fool would begrudge you your joy. But so also, my children, only would a fool believe without proof the words your leaders say unto you. There is the fool in everyone; be not ashamed of him, for he gives delight and laughter and leads through to knowledge by the example of his error. Those errors I shall show you now. Behind that stage, now emptied of your leaders, are hidden instruments of deception. There will you find machines to excite you, apparatus to enoble seeming miracles to be performed, even drugs to be placed in your food which later will lend your senses to excitement and to error. But be not too harsh in your judgment of those who so delud you. Each day is a delusion, ever the image of me high above you i not what it seems. Unreality is hal of what you know, so also is unrea the anger which most of you make now within your hearts. Be forgiving of your Thanes as you strip them of their robes and spurn their authority. Their temples you shall abandon. Their instruments of delusion you shall smash into ruin. Their drugs, trample into the earth as with a serpent. But harm not those who have tricked you, for each of you has permitted his delusion. Each by his fears, his hungers, his vanity, his will to escape, has made way for the deception practiced upon him. Would you punish another for your own shortcomings?

"Then, this you must do: Learn how you have been tricked. Take from those who have aided in that deception their robes, but gently, children, gently, for there are among the Thanes those who were sincere and loving—deceived even as you."

From the mob below in darkness arose a restless stirring as of winds angering the sea. The Colossus soothed it away with a simple authoritative motion of his hand. "You have been taken in by mountebanks. You have witnessed sleight of hand performances by skilled magicians. Should you now stone the players? I tell you no. See you not the great joke here?

"This is a world of time and of trouble, but one of laughter. The

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time and the trouble come even as the seasons. But the laughter is your unique contribution to the riches of the Universe. Offer it now, as worship. The Disciples are through . . . see to that. But see also to the laughter and the great good joke that the world plays upon itself. See beyond the robe, the mask, the play, the body, the sermon. The sermon, too, I say, for some of earths greatest sorrows are born within temples. I and heaven and beyond ask not for temples, but for love and laughter. Remember that, next time. For I say to you, I, your God, have appeared and I have spoken. Go in peace, my friends, but in resolution. The cult of the Disciples is an affront against your good natures and against the better life, and as such it is deserving of its end. But the members of that cult, they are not to be dealt with by you, for they have a greater lesson in store . . . they must be taught by themselves, by living. Laugh and love, there is no greater gift unto yourselves and unto me. Go now, in peace and with purpose.

"My children, my children . . . "

The giant in the sky raised his head, turned about and vanished as Simon Letona stepped off the boulder and out of focus of the projector. Someone snapped off the beams and the "cloud" upon which he had been standing faded swiftly away. The group on the ridge slowly began to break from their tight attitudes of awe. All but Leslie North. He stood by the projector, awaiting Letona's appearance.

THE slender man emerged from behind the rock, holding in his arms the bundled-up garb he'd worn; a simple little man now, in stained dungarees. "I took several liberties with your script, Leslie. Hope you'll forgive me, but the temptation to ham got the best of me." Smiling, he greeted Ginny Harris and the others with a nod, then tossed his costume in the weasle.

"Simon," North began, "I . . . "

"Yes?"

North laughed shortly, embarrassedly. "I don't know quite how to say this, but that was the greatest bit of acting I've ever seen."

Simon Letona took his arm in an easy friendly gesture. "Before we go, let's see what our efforts have accomplished." Together the two men walked to the edge of the cliff and looked down.

The valley of the Disciples, darkened for a time, was quickening into new light, but this glow was something more than the flare of spotlights and fluorescents. A small fire danced ever higher, marking the spot where the speaker's platform stood, and here and there other dots of flame grew brighter as more Disciple equipment was put to the torch.

Over all the valley hung an odd quiet, compounded of silence itself, and a faint but wind-like murmur of weeping hundreds.

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AT the lodge, they were met by Martha and Andy Smith, and by others of the group not tied to the work of analysis. And not until they had been made at ease by the friendly and seemingly shy Letona did their reserve vanish, for of course everyone at the lodge, like thousands of others in the vicinity, had witnessed the spectacle.

At last only Martha and Smith remained silent and apart, and when North went over to congratulate them on their part in the performance, the two had eyes only for Letona.

"Don't blame you, kids," said North. "It looked like the Second Coming to me, too. What was it like up there?" . . . .

"Well," began Andy, "funny thing . . . . " He and Martha eyed the slender man in dungarees.

"Yes," said Simon. "What was it like?"

"As Leslie said," answered Martha quietly, "like the Second Coming."

Letona bowed with mock grandness. "Next week 'East Lynn'."

AT three the following morning the electrifying news that the elixir had been analyzed ahead of schedule brought everybody from their rooms, crowding them into the lab. Dr. Matthews, making a good show of calmness, quietly described what had happened. "The X-factor was not the terribly complex structure we had thought it to be. Instead, it has turned out to be a rather simple, yet none-the-less odd, protein molecule with but eight hundred and twelve atoms in its makeup. Hitherto, our analysis of this molecule had failed, for we broke it down with reactive agents, and could study only the resulting amino acids. The hazy picture resulting from such a study taught us only that these a-a residues in Mr. Ganley's body possessed an almost ferocious appetite for attaching themselves to virus nucleoproteins. These 'good' residues seemed to literally smother microbes in a net of encrustration, as happens in everyone's body, but Mr. Ganley's brand of proteins apparently are far more flexible and alert than the normal variety. Their charge is higher, one might say, and their attraction to the null calls of dead cells is also remarkable. Furthermore, this protein molecule apparently possesses the ability to intensify the normal cell memory, or cell-gene, creating, in effect, a constant regeneration over the entire body. Immortality results. Dead cells and waste matter are rendered harmless and eliminated in the usual manner, nucleoproteins of all manner of virus and germs are killed as soon as they enter the body; and no deteriorating is possible as the regrowth of tissue is forever being urged. I do not understand how this molecule was originally created . . . certainly it has not been found before in nature, nor created in the laboratory. And, I suspect they themselves have the con-

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dition of immortality . . . dividing at the proper moment according to their atomic life, or perhaps — such intelligence do they show — having an active sex-life."

This last statement brought smiles to the non-technical members of the audience, and mixed frowns and astonishment to the rest. But Matthews hurried on, glancing at his watch. "The synthesis of this molecule should be done in a few minutes. We obtained such a beautiful math picture of it that any error inherent in either the analysis or in our duplication will no doubt be automatically cast out by the molecule itself, for as I said, it seems to have an intelligence of its own. Or one could put it that any error of our construction might be likened to a car, erroneously manufactured with a few rods dragging the pavement. The nature of the car is forward movement, and by its very nature the extraneous rods will be rasped away." Matthews paused, frowned. "A very bad analogy, but only with math could I show it any better."

Again he glanced at his watch. "The final testing of the synthesized fluid will take place before all of you. I'm certain you'd want that. The fluid should be here shortly, so in the meantime if any of you has a question . . . "

Someone asked how David Ganley's Indian friend had been in possession of such an amazing substance as the elixir, and why the entire Cheyenne nation had not become immortal.

"Well taken. For various reasons I am inclined to doubt that this particular molecule originated on earth. My rather bazarre speculation is that since certain tribes of the Great Plains Indians revered meterorites, and often used them in their "magic," a group of these molecules happened to be in the particular meterorite which David Ganley's samaritan ground into the original elixir. *He* died from loss of blood . . . quite beyond the regenerative abilities of the brew. Does that suggest an answer to both of your questions?"

ANOTHER wanted to know how the test would be carried out. "The biologists have manufactured a . . . well, I can only call it a 'creature.' The very existance of artificial protoplasm would shock the rest of the scientific world, but Denning and Chambers and the rest of the bio team here just cooked it up because they knew of no better way to prove the efficacy of the elixir. It can be said to have a life of its own, whatever that might mean, just as a crystal or a tree or an ape has life . . . but we won't go into that. Anyway, we'll squirt some of our synthetic onto this inert living protoplasm. Certain areas of it which have already been 'injured' and artificially aged will be watched. Around those areas, as around any animal injury, exists a peculiar electrical charge . . .

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not the simple positive, as was once thought, but a frequency that varies according to the amount of activity going on in the neighborhood of the wound. The elixir should rush to these charged spots, and also to the dead and dying areas. Of course, as our chunk of test creature has no blood stream and contains no cells with gene memory—I hope!—nothing very spectacular will happen. But the charge at those areas is certain to change. We hope. Ah . . .!"

He broke off as several of the bio lab team and one of his own assistants entered the room beaming, the first man holding aloft a syringe of murky fluid. There was a mass exodus after the man as they followed him through the room and into the biology lab.

There all was ready. Counters ran their delicate wires to almost every square inch of the repulsive footlong mass of jelly within its glass tank, and dials on those counters quivered at their respective indications. Into the room, planned to hold twenty at most crowded twice that number. Those directly before the tank sat on the floor to allow those in the rear a chance to watch.

And Matthews, with utterly no show of the emotions he must have felt, took the syringe and at a nod from those at the counters simply and undramatically ejected its contents onto the jelly. He stepped back, still holding the syringe and stared at the indicators.

Not a sound came from the jammed room.

A minute went by. Two, then one of the bio men let out an exclamation of relief. "Look! The Master counter!"

The five inch needle moved a fraction to the right, fell back, then jerked over a full inch. It hung there quivering, went another inch.

And now all the needles were in motion.

Those watchers immediately before the tank later swore that, although the jelly had no muscles, they saw a tremor pass through its length.

Matthews took a few unsteady steps away from the apparatus, then stopped and buried his face in his hands. He wept.

The hundred year search was over. They had triumphed.

DESPITE her age and bulk, old Thea Ganley's progress up the dark mountain trail was rapid, for fear lent her wings; fear and anger. Not fear of the image which had in a few minutes smashed the painstaking work of years (she knew the spectacle was a trick), but fear of the milling, praying, burning mob in the valley below.

At a bend in the trail she paused for breath and glanced back, her beady eyes fierce with hatred, her mind cataloguing in dollars and in years the damage being done. And it would be the same, no doubt, at the other temples. A mob like that . . . Thea Ganley knew about mobs. She had watched from behind the

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scenes too long to hope that the disillusioned and God-lusting horde would satisfy themselves with one night's orgy of destruction. They would fan out over the West like missionaries, inflaming others of the Disciples with their zeal, engulfing other buildings and equipment.

The fools!

But she knew mobs well enough to fear their unpredictability. Despite the apparition's injunction not to harm the leaders she shivered inwardly at the thought of what the sight of blood would do to that pack.

Thea Ganley took a last gulp of the fragrant air and resumed her climb, hugging the holstered pistol to her chest. Tears of self-pity sprang into her eyes at the thought of the supreme injustice of Fate. They had needed only a few more hours, or at the most, days to locate the laboratory. Only a little more time, lost now, to capture the scientists and to force from them their secrets — to pour into their work the resources of the Disciples.

Fatigue began to dull the edge of her wrath and as she plodded steadily upwards she sank once again into her favorite reverie: She, Thea Ganley, took the elixir. She sloughed off her ugly excess fat . . . and the weary years. She returned to the girl she had been at twenty-five, and about her she gathered not only the wealth of the world but men of her choosing. Brenner Hunt, certainly, for despite his attempt at perfidy, he could be charming and amusing.

Her thoughts boggled suddenly; Hunt was dead, wasn't he? Yes. Killed by that accursed brother of Martha North's, and by one of her agents—Smith.

So Hunt was gone. Well, there were others, then. There would be a world of others to choose from, once she was twenty-five again. Once she mastered the world.

The old woman stumbled as a stone turned beneath her feet. She fell, still clutching the gun. Cursing horribly Thea Ganley pushed herself again erect, her dream of youth and power now wrecked.

Damn them! Damn them for their cleverness, for their holding out against the superior intelligence and power of the Disciples. Damn them for their stupid altruism . . . she remembered one of their scientists—what was his name? Edgars. He had stood calmly before them on the eve of his execution and sketched the plan his group intended to follow when they found the secret—they would sell it secretly to a few men rich enough and good enough. With this money they intended to set up within the U.N. a committee who would administer immortality to anyone whose work profited the world.

Fools! Hypocrites!

But she, Thea Ganley, would not be stopped so easily. There were still a few years left to her. And although the organization of the Disciples was smashed forever, there was still that money-stuffed deposit box in New

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York, known only to herself. Although she would perforce be on her own, she was not through.

Thea Ganley swore this to herself as she came to the top of the trail. With this gun, she vowed, and with her clever mind, she would get enough money to travel to New York. She would change her appearance, lose weight . . . this time she really would, she really would! And then . . .

THE fat old woman gasped and rested for a few seconds, then started on down the ridge. Someday would come the exquisite pleasure of attending to Martha North and to that Smith. To Leslie North. To all those who had brought her to this. Should she kill them horribly, or better . . . should she simply cage them somewhere and let them watch her eternal beauty stay the same while they aged and aged and aged?

Minutes later, the woman waddled out of the woods and rejoiced to find the trail had led her to a road . . . an empty road, but one that fronted a brightly lighted lodge nearby. Slipping the gun from its case, Thea Ganley shoved it off safety, then concealed it in a fold of her dress. After pushing at her wispy hair and brushing off her clothes, she marched up to the front door.

"I've been in a coptor accident," she informed the man who let her in. "Something in the sky like a man, and we flew into another ship. Need help please. Can I use your telephone?"

The guard frowned. Seemed ok to him, and certainly possible that their bright ruse had drawn moths. "Ok," he said and closed the door of the empty lounge. When he turned again he found himself staring into the muzzle of a new automatic. A large new automatic, held steadily and correctly by a now ferocious-appearing woman.

"Why are you wearing a gun, man?" Thea Ganley whispered the question joyfully. Could it be that she had stumbled from ruin straight into *their* headquarters?

"My business, granny. You'd better put that thing away. Might go off." Cooly he began calculating the chances of jumping her, or of reaching the alarm button back of the bar. But before he reached any decision, the woman commanded him to go into the room marked "Ladies."

He did as she said, for there was too much distance between them to chance anything. If he could only manage to dive through the door, then roll it shut behind him . . .

Thea Ganley brought the gun savagely down across the base of his skull as he touched the door handle. He slumped, the weight of his body pushing him half inside the restroom. She shoved him the remainder of the way, stuffed his gun into a waste can, then waddled out . . . to all appearances simply a tired and rather frowsy old fat lady, with both her hands beneath her baggy coat.

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The act was unnecessary, however, or the cocktail lounge was still mpty.

Thea Ganley marched ponderously into the adjoining lobby.

At the other side of the room a an, his back to her, stood staring ut a small window at the night. he was only a few feet from him hen he turned suddenly.

For a heart-stopping moment she oggled at his features.

So it was true!

David Ganley *was* still alive.

THERE were a few seconds when a demon of rage begged her to hoot him on the spot. His death ight somehow atone for her years nd years of labor, for what had appened in the past few hours. She alf-pulled her gun from her dress, hen stuck it away again. Later, she old herself. Later there would be ime to see to this creature before er, but a shot now . . . here . . .

"I know who you are, my man. have an old photograph of you. t was taken in 1912, David, and ou haven't changed a bit since hen."

Ganley took several backward teps. "You're . . . you're Thea," vas all he could manage to the wom- n who came at him.

Slowly she nodded, then produced a gun and pointed it at him. I'm your great, great, great grandniece. Something like that, anyway. How does it feel, David, to be so old and to . . . " Thea Ganley bit off her words. Later, later.

"Have they discovered what makes the elixir work, David?"

The man glanced nervously down the corridor. "No."

"You're lying!" Viciously, Thea Ganley jabbed her gun into the man's stomach. This fool, she thought. This coward. What luck to have met him. "Aren't you lying!"

"Don't kill me, Mrs. Ganley. What'll that get you, huh? Look . . . " He sank against the sofa into which he had backed. "Look," he babbled, "let's talk this over, ma'am."

She pretended to become tempted. "Well?"

"Maybe I can help you, huh? You put the gun away, and I can . . . I can . . . " Helplessly he broke off, transfixed by the gun again thrust at him.

"I'm not going to kill you, David Ganley. I'm going to put several bullets into you where they will hurt you and make you bleed terribly and bring you horrible pain." The sight of his twitching face brought immense relish to her. "But I might not if you'll tell me the truth. Have they found anything new about the elixir? Have they cracked it?"

He nodded eagerly.

"When?"

"Last few days. Tonight, that is. Tonight they are sure."

"And you'll take me to them?"

Again the nod. What kind of woman was she, David Ganley wond-

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ered, that she wanted to be taken into their presence? Did she hope she'd be able to get away with the elixir? Or maybe to sneak off with the formula? Brave, she was!

He felt a twinge of self-contempt. A woman, and braver than he by far. An old woman, alone and beaten, but not aware of the fact.

"I said take me to them!"

It was an order this time, and he was certain she wouldn't hesitate to kill him. He got up and led the way to the checkroom behind the desk.

They could take care of her all right. Downstairs, there'd be a lot of people with guns, men who . . . Men! Bitterly he tasted the word. Men who wouldn't be as yellow as he, so cringingly afraid of injury or death. Men who hadn't lived a quarter of his years, yet who were willing to toss life away for loyalty and duty.

And the years and years and years ahead of him to despise himself . . . .

"WHAT'S the matter with you? Why are you stopping here?" Thea Ganley's voice was harsh with menace.

He didn't answer her. He was thinking of the years behind him, the times of long nights and loneliness when he had been forced to remember . . . The women he had married growing older, going toward death, while he so feared death that he had kept the secret of the elixir, kept every precious drop hugged to his love of himself, to his fear.

The gun jabbed his back. "Go or David. Move!"

He walked ahead. "There's an el evator in here. It runs down to th labs." Wearily he entered before her found the stud and pressed it. A barely audible whine began.

She would take the secret an go, he supposed. Was there such harm in that? The men down in th labs, they knew how to build th elixir . . . that knowledge couldn' be stolen. At worst there would be, i the future, two methods of obtain ing longevity—through decree of th U.N. committee, or purchased at fan tastic prices from this woman.

The cab arrived and he slid oper the door.

But wait! Would Thea Ganley le anyone else live with that know ledge? Wouldn't she find out what she wanted, then kill those others who knew?

The gun prodded him again. He entered the cab.

She would kill, he decided. If not now, then as soon as she could round up enough of the Thanes. Martha, Andy, Matthews, West, Miss Harris, Mrs. Edgars . . . they would all have to go. And his new friend, Simon Letona, the man who understood him so well, yet liked him. Dead, all of them.

"Miss Ganley, you won't hurt any of them, would you?"

She slid shut the door. "Now make it go."

"Miss Ganley . . . ?"

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"Shut up, you fool. Get this cab going."

She would kill.

There were three buttons on the wall of the cab. First level, deeper level, and alarm. They were unlabeled. She would not know, he realized, what he was doing. Could he go through with it?

He stabbed at the first level and the car sank with them.

The cab stopped and he pressed the second. "It's built like that," he muttered. "Has to stop at each floor or it'll give an alarm." His heart was pounding crazily, but a strange exultation was gripping him. Perhaps it wouldn't hurt so bad . . .

The car stopped again and he slowly reached out and touched the bottom stud. Bells sounded, near and far away, and over their alarm crashed the stunning report of the gun. The floor of the car came up and it hit his back, but there was no hurt . . . only a sweet happiness, a freedom such as he had never before known. *He* had done this! And while life was still with him he rolled against the cursing woman's legs and pulled. She fell half across him, the gun spanging against the metal wall.

David's hand closed over her gun hand as she struggled to right her bulk. It was dimly surprising to him that she had so little strength, actually; only her hatred and her crazed ambition had brought her this far. He had to stop her, he knew. Slowly, he twisted the gun away from himself. It went off again, and he felt the punch of a terrific fist in his side.

He shouted, laughed wildly. "It doesn't hurt! Doesn't hurt!"

The gun's next explosion was muffled, for the muzzle was smothered in a fold of Thea Ganley's gross chest.

The bells went on ringing, but their noise slowly changed into a great light, and the light got bigger and bigger and . . .

THE rains of spring had gone, and the mountain world basked in easy sunlight. Already, grass was beginning to soften the fresh earth above what had been David Ganley, and in the stand of nearby pines, bluejays and squirrels argued happily, tirelessly.

Martha North gravely accepted the absurd bouquet Andy had made for her from lupine and wild primrose. "Thank you, my knight." Taking his hand, she got to her feet and brushed at her skirt. "It's hard to get used to, isn't it?"

"Us, you mean?"

She nodded. "That most of all, but also being able to come and go as we please. No more guns, no more sneaking and running and anxiety. Last night, down at the village with Les and Ginny, well, it wasn't until the third martini that I began to . . ." Martha broke off and eyed the man who walked beside her. "What's the matter, dear? The same thing? Letona?"

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He nodded. "I've got to know. Got to talk it over with somebody. Maybe Les or Ginny or somebody else has the answer."

They walked a while in silence, past rows of cabins, then entered the shortcut path back to the lodge. "All right," Martha at last said. "Les and Ginny. They were on hand through it all, closer than anyone else down there. Maybe . . . maybe his voice was somehow projected, along with his image. There's probably a simple scientific reason."

"You hope," he said.

"I hope."

An hour later, as the sun began to slide from its zenith of noon, the two sought out Les and the actress. Andy took them away from the lodge and put his question bluntly.

"Les, who is Simon Letona?"

"Huh? Why, I dunno. He's your man. Martha must have checked on him when he came. Didn't you, sis?"

Martha shook her head. "I can't remember. That sounds impossible, I know, but it's the truth. There was a time when he wasn't here, then he was. And I've no record in the files on him."

"He's no common laborer," Ginny said. She pushed a reluctant lock of hair from her eyes and added, "The man's deep, kids. Really deep. And we all know what an actor he is. But who cares where he came from or how he got here? What's the worry about, Smith?"

Andrew Smith and Martha exchanged a long look, then the man spoke. "The worry is this: That night when we put on our show for the Disciples . . . The radio in the coptor wasn't working."

"I DON'T follow you." Les North took the cigarette from his mouth carefully.

"I'm telling you that we didn't broadcast a damn thing from our coptor. Oh, the first word maybe, then a tube blew. Martha was flying, and I was bending over the set. I saw it flash and go pop! I saw the whole damn set start smoking. But his voice, Les, his voice was coming out of the amplifying speakers. I could even feel the roar of it vibrate us now and then. And the tube was really gone. I turned it over to the lab when we got back and one of the boys gave it a low-voltage rectifier test to humor me. It was all black and smoked inside, but I had to know. Don't you see? There wasn't any possible way he could have been broadcast from our rig in the coptor."

"But . . ." Ginny Harris seized his arm. "That's silly, Andy. We heard him. Everyone for miles around heard him."

"I'm afraid they did," said Letona from behind them. "Why didn't you come to me and ask, Andrew?"

"Because," said the man, "I was afraid you'd tell me."

Letona's lips curved into a slight smile. "Suppose the five of us walk down toward the lake. It will be

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asier for you, I believe, than if I xplained while we stood here. All ight?"

For a few hundred feet they walked in silence down the broad dirt oad. Martha clung tightly to Andy Smith's hand, and Ginny was exchanging expressions of bewilderment with Les North.

The road led out through the pines, urned, and brought them into sight of the dazzlingly blue waters of Lake Arrowhead.

Simon Letona sighed. "I wish there were a better word, but in this era and in English there is only one: I am God."

Les North stopped short and wheeled to confront the slender man. "Oh, no!" His voice was heavy with sarcasm, and the faces of the others reflected his disbelief.

Letona closed his eyes. "Again," he said dryly. "So it has always been, my friends. You four are . . . let me see . . . this is about the three-hundredth time I have chosen to reveal myself, and always it is the same . . . even with those who have already half-convinced themselves of my identity, and even with those who are mad to believe. On only ten occasions have I been able to say and be believed without having to resort to other means. It is the word itself—'God.' So heavily has that word been loaded that the chief reaction to it is emotional. But wait . . . would it help if I told you I was once as you? A man, a normal human, a guy? That was a long, long time ago . . . even as I reckon time, but I remember it well."

Abruptly he turned to confront Les North. "I'll answer that question before you ask it, my friend. The land was this continent itself, and more exactly, the strip of Mexico now called Baja California. It was wider then. Greener. In your lifetime, North, you will see with your own eyes some of the archeological wealth that will come from there. I lived there over three thousand years ago." He looked away from the expression of shock on North's face, glanced in turn at each of the others.

"And I know your questions. It is only normal for you to have them, so also is it normal for you to doubt. Then let us try again . . . in another manner."

AFTERWARD, the four came to agreement on the chief portions of the experience that ensued. North and Ginny Harris recalled that an observing portion of their minds sat aloof and tended to the physical effort of their walking and responding and asking questions. But they could never remember if they spoke their questions aloud.

Martha insisted, later, that Letona had spoken, but the other three denied it. And Andy Smith told them that he and Simon Letona carried on a long conversation about Smith, himself; no one else was aware of it, it seems. He also claimed the entire dialogue, as well as other infor-

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mation Letona had imparted, had been conducted on an entirely silent or mental plane. Whatever the method, and whatever their later discrepancies, they came easily to belief. It was impossible to doubt him, for he was indeed God.

They learned first about the position their planet held in the teeming society of an ever-expanding universe—that Earth's affairs were but an achingly tiny aspect of that greater concern.

Life spanned the gulfs of space, and there was hardly a piece of matter out in the voids, and in the "emptiness" itself, that did not harbor intelligence.

Men, and beings who closely resembled them, thrived on thousands of worlds besides Earth's, some of them older in their cultures than Earth itself.

"And why haven't they contacted us?" It was Ginny who asked the question . . . or thought she had. But the answer they all remember.

They have contacted you many times. Once, just a few years ago, there was a man of certain talents that was desperately needed in another star system. Permission was granted for him to be taken and returned.

"And why didn't he tell of his experiences?"

Who would believe him? Who will believe you *this* experience?

Again, it had been deemed expedient to subject a far more superior culture than Earth's to the raw vitality of this planet. That too had been done . . . several times Legends and tribal memories of such visitations exist the world over.

Mistakes, too, had occurred.

"Mistakes? But . . . But you are God."

I am *a* God. This is a vast universe, and I am simply one of millions who has been returned to his native world. I am a coordinator of man's efforts . . . at times. I am an observer. I am forced, at times, to be an executioner, and at every turn a judge. I am not allowed to affect the course of your history except at singularly critical moments, and at times when the outcome would seriously disturb the course of normal growth of other intelligence. Such a moment occurred last week when I addressed the Disciples, but I could not possibly make you understand why I was forced to inject the factor of my participation. You simply could not comprehend; there exists no vocabulary on earth, no language, no concept tools to handle even the rudest explanation of the crisis. I am sorry. But despite my centuries of training and the ages of my apprenticeship for my task, there remains the fact that I am still an Earthling . . . or was, and as long as there be intelligence, there also exists the chance for error. I have made mistakes. It is to be expected, met, and repaired when it happens. Just as with you.

"You are *a* God? There are others?"

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Thousands and millions of others, my child. 'God' is but the term for he or she who is assigned the task of overseeing a planet. There have been many others for Earth, and there shall be more when I go to other tasks. I am new to my position here. I have been totally in charge for less than nine hundred years. I have three times that span to stay on.

"And then?"

Then I shall become a teacher. Of Gods.

"And then?"

A neophyte of a larger sector of . . . of existence. Do not ask more of that, for again you could not comprehend.

"And are you not all-powerful? If you are, then why . . . "

The old, old question. But I am not all-powerful. No one, nothing is. Here, on Earth, I seem it to you, but remember I am strictly limited to the extent of my intervention. And the moments *you* would choose to use God-like powers would not often be the proper ones according to a higher level of perception.

"You are limited? By what?"

By the degree of my skills, and by those above me.

"And above them?"

There are always others, on up, higher and higher, till I cannot conceive of more. But they are there. I doubt if there is any ultimate authority. There is only steady growth, steady progression of learning and of pleasure and of responsibility. That is why your wise men have forever set down tenents of conduct; so that your future growth shall be more rapid, more pleasurable. Also, of course, they discovered that one could exist, even as an Earthling, more happily and more profitably if he brings not pain to others and gives freely of himself.

"You were a man. What happened . . . after . . . ?"

There are good reasons I cannot tell you that. Remember, though, that there is no Death. There are, to your eyes, ugly and sad ways of going from one life to another, but they are of such short moment that they matter little. There will always be partings from those you love, but there will always be reunion. Always.

"Simon. Simon Letona."

A name. My others are legion. My first one, almost unpronouncable to you.

"And what is to become of us, now that we *know?*"

Others have known. For some the knowledge slowly fades. That is best for them, perhaps. For others, knowing means only that they face life with more confidence than before, and that some things matter more, others less. For the four of you I expect will come that surety, and I am certain greater ability to work and to love and to enjoy. But there will forever in this Earth existence be the expectation of things to come, for I say to you that this experience when set against knowledges and

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happenings to come *afterwards* will be but the contentment of a baby with warmth as compared with the delight of a lover with his beloved, or a scientist with his discovery.

There is only a little time remaining for me to be with you now, my friends, but I promise you this . . . we shall meet again, and you will laugh with me over the memory of this happening, so young then will seem your initial shock and disbelief. I have enjoyed my time with you, and in the years to come, I shall see you briefly . . . from outside your awareness. Be proud of the part you have played in the events just past, for though you now see that earthly immortality is not to be desired you were correct in assuming that this world of ours can benefit from the lengthened labors of a talented few.

GINNY Harris, Les North, Andrew Smith, and Martha North: They stood closely together as the slight figure, still in his wrinkled work clothes, bade them farewell. It was early evening; time had vanished astonishingly, and a brisk wind came to them from off the lake.

He who was called Simon Letona walked away down the old logger's road that led to the twinkling village.

The evening stars came out.

THE END

?

GYRTHYXRPQRPF ★

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The smashing final installment of Rog Phillips' greatest novel. Having read the first installment, you know enough not to miss it!

I'M A STRANGER HERE MYSELF

Eric Frank Russell, always a favorite, does a spine-chilling short.

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SPECIAL FEATURES

THIS special section of OTHER WORLDS is for your own participation and enjoyment. Here you will find your letters to the editor; your jokes (for which we will pay $1 each); your personal messages to your fellow readers (published free); reviews of science fiction books worthy of your attention; the latest news of what's going on in the world of authors, editors, rival magazines, fan clubs, even individual readers; your bookshop; cartoons; fact articles; interviews with individuals in the public eye and many others. If you have any suggestions as to improvements and additional features, remember your word is our golden rule.

THE MAN FROM TOMORROW

MY name is immaterial to you. I am from the Future. Five hundred years in the Future. To me, of course, it is all the Past. I have in my possession, the history of that Past. It is quite a history, I assure you. And because I've found a way to contact your period in that history, I find it interesting to come to you to tell you about it. Frankly, I am engaged in an experiment. I want to know if pre-knowledge can change the events to come (from your viewpoint) or the events of the Past (from my viewpoint). Also, I pity you. I feel concerned about your fate. I want to warn you. I want to help you, if possible.

Looking at history from the viewpoint of the already accomplished, hindsight shows many possibilities which might have been utilized to make less arduous the road into Destiny. Perhaps what I say may enable some of you, who will believe, to avoid much of the sadness and the hardship that faces you. Forewarned is forearmed. I am warning (and arming you) with the *truth!*

First, let me say that Time Travel, as envisaged in your fanciful fiction, is impossible. Yet, it is possible to contact any *place* in Time. Yes, Time is a Place. It can be done with the Mind. That is how I have contacted you. Via the mind of a man I have come to know because a portion of his brain, usually unused by human beings, a mystery to scientists, has become activated by an injury. I can contact him, and he is entirely aware of my contact. He and I have agreed to perform my little experiment, and what I shall say in this new "feature" of his magazine OTHER WORLDS, of which History says nothing, is dictated by me, written by him.

Naturally, you will not believe. Not at first. But we make you one little proposition: let the proof of

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the pudding be in the eating! If what I tell you does not come to pass, then this is pure fiction. But if it does . . .*

*Note by Ray Palmer: The foregoing was written by my hand. But the gist of it comes to me as a silent voice, unheard by others present. It does not come in the form of the words and sentences I have used, but merely as an impression which I must "translate". Sometimes what is "said" is incomprehensible to me. Those incomprehensible things I do not attempt to record. It is better that they exist as gaps in the continuity than as errors. But it is completely true that I was injured in an accident that, among other things, caused temporary paralysis of my legs. This injury was to the spinal cord, a severe contusion, which officially was supposed to render me permanently paralyzed from the waist down. Yet, the paralysis was not the only effect of the injury. From the beginning I had what can properly be called illusions, hallucinations. The shock of the injury was quite severe. Out of my head, at first, I imagined many things. For instance, I saw many nude women dancing in the air about my bed—which, of course, I thoroughly enjoyed! I knew them for what they were, and undoubtedly psychiatrists can tell you *why* they appeared. But I'm not bashful of my humanness! Nor do I worry about my engrams, pre-natal impressions, or Freudian imbalances. But then other things happened which I could no rationalize. I found myself *predicting the future!* I *knew* of events before they happened. I tried out my newfound power on friends, startled some of them with my accuracy. Their reaction was varied, but usually rationalized to the point of "a good guess"; a "lucky shot in the dark". But to me, the frequency of it was beyond the normal of "chance". And it grew. Perhaps there is no Man From Tomorrow. Perhaps he is my imagination, always a fertile one as a science fiction writer and editor. But I think not. I think I have contacted some intelligent entity who is trying to tell me something. Since it seems to concern *everybody* in our TIME, I am passing it on to you, my readers and friends. I don't ask you to believe. But I do ask you to give me credit when I am right, and lambast me when I am wrong. And further, you may put me to tests: you may ask questions which I will attempt to answer, *provided the answer comes to me via the strange mental pictures I receive.* I will not guess, I will not hazard. IF these things I say are *truth*, I disclaim any responsibility for knowing them. If they are false, it would be because I tried to answer of my own accord. Let the chips fall where they may. In this section of OTHER WORLDS, each issue, I am challenging the world. It is not an empty challenge. On guard, readers, for this will startle you! I guarantee it.—Rap

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In order to begin this experiment, I am selecting a subject which seems to be a natural one in all ages—the weather. Even today, in my time, five hundred of your years away, the saying still exists that "many people talk about the weather, but few do anything about it." Yet, in the Past, Man *has* done things about it, some deliberately, and some unknowingly.

History (of which few written records remain today of the period from 1950 to 1980) tells us a bit about the weather, but it is in a science known even in your time, the reading of tree rings, that a positive picture can be gotten of the period from 1945 to 1995. During those fifty years, the Earth, as a whole, entered and endured a period of cold, wet weather. Although this was an *average* condition, there were areas where great heat, causing desert-like conditions, did exist. These were due to peculiar currents in the upper atmosphere which, combined with mountain ranges and ocean areas, continually diverted rainfall and cooler air from these desert areas.

Beginning in 1945, drastic weather changes became apparent, at first chaotic, as the new conditions battled the old, and the result was freakish weather which became more and more freakish until it became apparent at the end of 1951 and in the early months of 1952, that a change *was* coming about. Meteorology was thrown into a turmoil, and the weather became the topic of all, upon the slightest provocation. The winter of 1951-52 set all-time records for precipitation, resulting in tremendous snowfall that bettered even the record-breaking winter of 1950-51. Particularly so was the incidence of heavy snowfall in areas previously too far south to have previously experienced them. These heavy snowfalls caused much hardship in these areas, and the accompanying cold caused catastrophic crop damage. Especially in Europe and in Asia, where famine threatened even with 1946, and came to actuality through 1947-53, was the freakish weather damaging.

It devolved on the United States, whose 1951 crops were huge, but not as huge as they would have been had not incessant rain, and incessant heat in some southwestern areas, retarded growth to a considerable degree, to feed the less fortunate areas of the world. However, in the year when the United States planned to lessen the ravages of famine in other parts of the world, she found herself forced to curtail her responsibility. The result of this was a political setback which had a great deal to do with encouraging the advance of communism in these famine-ridden countries.

India, especially, suffered in 1951-52. Europe was a bit better off, largely because she received the bulk of American aid. But in countries behind Russia's "Iron Curtain", starvation stalked the land. Except

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in areas where Russia was building satellite armies.

The new practice of causing rain in parched areas by seeding clouds with silver iodide became the subject of much discussion, and was continually blamed for the excessive rainfall in areas where it was already sufficient. Yet, the truth of the matter was that the use of silver iodide cannot cause rain except where clouds already exist. And these clouds existed in quantities unheard of in history as it was recorded by meteorologists of the day. These clouds were caused by the intensified experimentation which was going on in 1951 and 1952 in atomic weapons of warfare.

The winter of 1951-52 resulted in record-breaking cold throughout the world. Lows of 61 degrees below zero were recorded in Wisconsin, Manitoba and Saskatchewan, with a tremendous drop to 74 degrees below zero in the Hudson Bay area. Crops in Florida were severely damaged by temperatures as low as 19 degrees below zero. Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Chicago, New York and Kansas City suffered record-breaking snowfall. There was much hardship in Mississippi, Kentucky, Louisiana because of the lack of heating facilities in homes. Tremendous windstorms battered the Atlantic seaboard and Florida and the Gulf of Mexico. In northern India, thousands froze to death.

Most publicized weather of the winter, however, was in Korea, where the United Nations battled the Chinese Communists and Russian arms. A great play was made in the newspapers, stressing the hardships undergone by American soldiers. These hardships were hailed as blessings where they afflicted the Chinese, who suffered far more because of insufficient and poorly made clothing. During the winter the United States tested a new aerial weapon and a new type of aircraft which caused great jubilance among military circles because of its immense success. The death toll on the Chinese was staggering, but so also was the casualty list of the United Nations troops, battling an enemy who stubbornly refused to discontinue the pitting of numbers against technology.

With the Spring of 1952 came an extension of the war into Manchuria, via the air, and an increasingly tense situation in the Middle East, where Russia struck boldly for oil. The battle at first was political, underground, a cold war of nerves, of false alarms. Then in 1953 it flared into open conflict, centered around the armies of Jugo Slavia. This was an attempt to divert Russian pressure from the Iran-Turkey-Israel area.

But, the true reason for the diversion of the action to the new battlefields was the weather. For by 1953 King Winter had all but vanquished Summer in many areas of the northern world.

These words were written on October 10, 1951.

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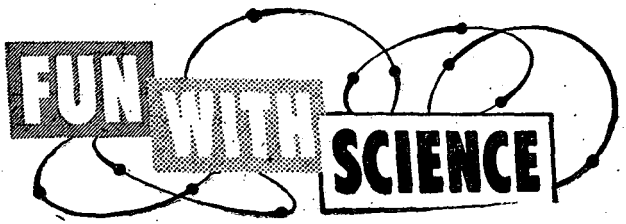

THIS month we're going to "dig" the geologists a bit! Of course it's all in fun! First, let's define geology. Geo—that's Gee, oh! It's something like Golly, Oh Boy! It's from the Greek Geo, or tell it to George. Log—that's what you roll off of when laughing. Y—that's the crucial question, why? We'll answer it at the end of our "gentle rib" as the mother of us all is called!

Up in Wisconsin they have something they are very proud of—in spite of the fact that other states sneer and point at their own (much bigger). This something is Rib Mountain, near Wausau. Very appropriate, that name. It's like a gigantic rib stuck up in the center of Wisconsin, a mute guffaw which should ring in geologists' ears around the world. The Wisconsin people are proud of it because it's the highest point in Wisconsin (they believe, but they aren't sure, because the sign says "probably"—it seems there are other claimants, but the trees are so tall it's impossible to tell for sure). Okay, let's visit Wisconsin's pride and glory . . .

First, it's beautiful. We'll grant that. A very lovely spot. And it's a sportsman's paradise. Ski slides, toboggan slides, all types of winter sports—plus the most magnificent summer outing place in the whole state. It's a very brilliant white rock. Harder than granite, say the geologists. And it's high. When you climb to the top (you can drive up too, and get a coke or a bag of popcorn when you get there) you can see for a very good distance. The city of Wausau, spread out below, is visible in its entirety, like a white jewel in a green setting. Lakes and rivers dot and vein the bosom of America's loveliest state. (*Reader's Digest*, please note that last sentence!) Yes, it's high. The map says 1940 feet. Then, beside the rock which marks that highest spot, is a sign: 1940 feet, the highest spot in Wisconsin. Fifty-nine feet away is another sign, with its back to the first sign: 1947 feet, the highest point in Wisconsin. Yes, it's high, all right. But just how high we can't say for sure. Fact is, we geologists and surveyors and mathematicians can't measure the height of any mountain *exactly*. That's the *truth* about that little foible of scientific humans—they have exact mathematics and exact geometry and exact instruments—and when they fail to read each other's signs, they always dis-

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agree! But never have they disagreed so blatantly as at Rib Mountain!

Erected on the mountain are huge rustic signboards, telling the geology of the region. Rib Mountain, says one, is a mountain because it was once a seashore, and the sand of that ancient shore (plenty long ago, believe us!) became impregnated with something or other which changed it to quartz. Lovely white quartz. Thus, when the *entire state* was eroded, Rib Mountain remained 800 feet above the surrounding plain, a proud monument to a really difficult job of digging by Nature. Six million years ago, Wisconsin was the bottom of a sea, and Rib Mountain (in the center) the shore. We gaze out over the vista with awe: a whole state washed away (where?) just to make this one mountain. 800 feet of *granite* (yes, that's what it says! and granite is softer than quartz, so it washed away) eaten away by *wind* and *rain*. No wonder it took six million years (with consumate grace, the word "approximately" is mentioned in connection with the number)!

Let's walk a few feet further: Now we see a sign which tells us this area was once a vast area of mountains. All Wisconsin was mountains. Now all are gone, except Rib Mountain. Washed away. Blown away. Disintegrated away. The geologist who put up this sign was unaware of the ancient sea which once covered Wisconsin. But no matter, why should he cater to another's whims? Hew to your last, my boy! Or whatever.

Beside one gigantic rock, we discover another amazing fact. This rock, says a geologist, having erected *his* sign, was once the bottom of the beach mentioned in the first sign. Proof is in the "ripple marks" on its *side*. Since the rock remains in the plane all the mountain now occupies, it seems obvious to the geologist that the whole mountain has been upended and turned on its side. Ripples in the sand. Time's footprints, preserved through a miracle. Obviously, however, something besides erosion, wind, rain and Time has worked on Wisconsin. It's been literally tossed into the air like a tossed salad. At least Rib Mountain has. Or folded, the geologist hazards. Something folded it. Folded quartz. It folds easily. Except that all the lines are straight.

Apparently, somebody, wondering about the strangeness of this chunk of quartz sticking up in the middle of Wisconsin, asked the geologists (who ought to know—they are geologists, students of rocks) how come? So, the geologists have answered: the conditions at Rib mountain are there because of a previous condition, either a sea bottom or a mountain range. Both the sea and the mountains have gone away, leaving only erosion in their places.

But what caused the sea or the mountains (take your choice) in the

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first place? How *explain* them? (Say, this could get monotonous!) *Why* explain Rib Mountain? Why, we ask you, not just assume the logical, that it was there from the beginning (whatever that was)? At least we could figure it out for ourselves, in our quaint, individual ways. But all those signs . . . !

Frankly, we're confused!

PERSONALS

Wanted: Early Arkham House books in good condition with dust wrappers. Jack Cordes, 315 Catherine St., Pekin, Ill. . . . *A stf correspondence club, the Variants, wants members age 15-25. If you're interested, write Hal Hostetler, Box 163, Cairnbrook, Pa., or Sheldon Deretchin, 1234 Utica Ave, Brooklyn 3, NY.* . . . Would like to correspond with stf comic book fans. Also want back issues of Weird Science and Weird Fantasy. Victor Stredicke, 2611 S. 192 St., Seattle 88, Wash. . . . *Warren Freiberg, 5018 W. 18th St., Cicero 50, Ill., wants Superman color newspaper comics for 1940-45. Will pay 10c-25 and 40c-1.00. Will pay 5c-20 and 30c-75 Superman daily newspaper comics for 1940-45. Will pay 5c each for Superman Comic Books No. 1, 2, 3 & 4* . . . Would like to buy the Oct. '50 issue of Galaxy: Robert A. Peterson, 429 Anderson St., Greencastle, Ind. . . . *Bill Coletti, Mendota St. Hosp., Madison, Wisconsin, would like a complete list of E. R. Burroughs books and wants to buy any out of print Burroughs books* . . . Jan Romanoff, 26601 S. Western, Apt. 341, Lomita, California., will trade U.S. and foreign stamps for back issues of stf and ftsy mags. Prefers aSF, TWS, Unknown, Cap Future, Argosy, All Story, etc. . . . *Would like to correspond with teenage fans in and around Calif. interested in stf and in trading books and mags. Ken Scorso, 1340 Vallecito Pl., Carpinteria, Calif.* . . . Claude Held wants back issues of Weird Tales (pre '28), Thrill Book, Strange Tales, Horror Stories, Terror Tales, etc. Address 307 E. Utica St., Buffalo 8, NY. . . . *Thomas Giammo, 1662 Cropsey Ave., Brooklyn 14, NY. wants Galaxy Novels (except No. 5) and Jan. '51 aSF* . . . Have back issues of AS, OW, aSF and others for 25c each. Send want list. Also have books by Haggard, Burroughs and Rohmer for sale, state your price. Robert L. Bell, 2801 Cedar Ave., Long Beach 6, Calif. . . . *Have pocket book Bradbury's "Martian Chronicles", will trade for what-have-you? Maurice Lubin, 123 Sherman St., Portland, Maine* . . . Will sell or trade over

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200 stf books and about 75 mags. Range from juvenile "Oz" and "Tom Swift" books to real rarities. Will trade for Burroughs or mags like Scoops, Outlands, Thrills Inc., Wonder Tales, Oriental, Uncanny, Terror Tales, etc. Send wants. Eldon K. Everett, P.O. Box 513, Tacoma, Washington . . . *Wanted: Oct. '47-Aug. '50 TWS; Nov. '43, Mar, May '50 SS; Fantasy & SF No. 1 & 3; Pilgrims Through Space & Time, Bailey; pre '44 aSF; pb's The Lurking Fear, Lovecraft; Murder Of The USA, Jenkins; Coronet mags with Bonestell space illos; Worlds Within, Phillips; info concerning Prize SF Novels. Will sell or trade: Nov '49 aSF; Mar. '50 OW; Oct '50 Galaxy. Anthony Lauria, Jr., 873 E. 181 St., New York 60, NY.* . . . Want flying saucer clippings giving local detail from newspapers, obscure mags, radio references, etc. Source & date needed if tear-sheets sent. Also want books and mag material by Joseph McCabe. Hundreds of fantasy & stf items to trade for above. Hugh Brock, 1810 24th Ave South, Seattle 44, Wash. . . . *ASMODEUS No. 2, 1st Anniversary issue containing material by Lovecraft, C. A. Smith, Bob Silverberg, Lin Carter, Lillith Lorraine, M. DeAngelis, R. L. Carter, H. Steiner, Evelyn Thorne & many others. 34 pages, 15c. A. H. Pesetsky, 1475 Townsend Ave, NYC 52* . . . Need pre '42 FFM; 1st 4 prewar FN & Sept '49 FN; pre '49 aSF; OW; Madge; the following ERB material: Mad King, War Chief, Back To The Stone Age, Land Of Terror, Girl From Hollywood, Oakdale Affair, Tarzan Twins, and most of his mag stories that have not appeared in book form. State price and condition. John Ruyle, 121 Sunset Drive, Concord, Calif. . . . *Allen Klinger, 917 Ogden Ave, NYC 52, will send a list of 50 reading copies of recent stf mags he wants to trade on receipt of a list of at least 10 mags of the same variety* . . . Have July and Aug '51 Galaxy and Novels No. 1, 4 & 6; The Amphibians and The World Below, both by S. Fowler Wright; will trade for Unknown, Amazing, Fate or OW. Phyllis Hollins, 209 Forrest Ave., Radford, Va. . . . *William H. Pearson, 216 S. Beech, Oxford, Ohio, has for sale a collection of aSF complete from Apr. '44* . . . Will sell the following complete collections: Fate Magazine, Other Worlds, Magazine of Fantasy & S-F. Also have Dark Odyssey by Donald Wandrie and several other stf mags. Donald V. Shackelton, 7 Maple Ave, Sidney, NY. . . . *Will sell the following mags, condition good to excellent: TWS, Oct '49, Feb; Apr, June & Aug '50, Aug & Oct '51; AS, Oct '50, Jan, Feb, Mar, June & Sept '51; WT, Sept & May '48, Jan, May & Nov. '49, Jan, Mar, May, July & Sept '50, Jan, Mar, May 51; FFM, Feb, June, Aug & Oct '50, May & Mar '51; FA, Oct & Nov. '50, Jan, Mar & Apr '51; Fate, July, Sept, Nov & Dec '50, Jan, Apr. & July '51; 10 Story Fantasy,*

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Spring '51; Avon Fantasy Reader No. 9 & 15; Worlds Beyond, Jan '51; Marvel, Feb '51; Stf Qrtly May '51; Wonder Story Annal, '50 & '51; A. Merritt's F M, Apr '50; Mag of Fantasy & Stf, Winter-Spring '50, Summer '50, Feb-Apr '51, May-June '51; Suspense, Spring '51; Fantasy Stories Mag Nov '50; Omnibook Mag Sept '48; stf Reader No. 1; Fantastic Story Q, Summer '50, Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter, '51 (FSM); OW July & Oct '50; PS, Spring, Fall & Nov. '50, Mar & May '51; Super Science, Jan, Mar, May, July, Sept & Nov '50, Jan, Apr, June & Aug '51; SS, Jan, Mar & May '51; TWS, Oct '50, Feb, Apr & June '51; FN, May, July, Sept & Nov '50; Future, Nov '50, Jan, Mar, May, July & Sept '51; PB's Burn Witch Burn by Merritt and The Green Girl by Williamson. 3-25c, *minimum order* $2.00 *prepaid, or will trade entire stock of pulps for flash camera or a flash attachment for a Brownie Special* (616 *film*). *Bob Farnum,* 104 *Mountain View Dr, Daltan, Ga.* . . . Have once-read copies of all stf mags since late '48. All 25c mags except aSF to sell at 12-$2.50 post paid or will trade two issues for any pre '47 aSF. Peter Rusello, 23 Woodlawn Ave, Massena, NY. . . . *Have 100 PB's in perfect condition; adventure, action or "unusual" type; no westerns, mysteries or love novels. Will trade for like amount of stf mags. No trade under five units. H. C. Van Deventer, Box 172, Pontiac, Ill.* . . . Putting out a fanzine (6½ x 9) and need material. Also subscriptions, 10c each, 3-25c. Cosmic, c/o Joseph Semenovich, 40-14 10 St. Long Island City 1, NY. . . . *Stf and fantasy mags and PB's for sale. SS & TWS back as far as* '40; 1st 3 *AS* '39; *PS* '48 & '49; *FFM, FN, Super Science, etc; British & USA PB's. Prices reasonable. A. J. Offutt, Jr., Box* 128, *Taylorsville, Ky.* . . . Charles Nuetzel, 16452 Moorpark, Encino, Calif, wants to buy E. R. Burroughs serials. Lowest quotes will be answered . . . *Wanted: Back issues of all stf mags; correspondence with all fiends of fandom, bar none; original artwork, reproductions, or what have you by Bok, St. John, Finlay, etc. Jerry Higgins,* 1813 *Dayton, St. Paul* 4, *Minn.* . . . DESTINY No. 4 now available. High quality, lithographed fanzine. Original Bok cover. Stories, book reviews, poetry. 32 pages, 25c. Mal Willits, 11848 S E Powell, Portland, Oregon . . . *John Slaninka, 716 15th St, Bellingham, Wash., wants Prince Valiant color newspaper comics prior to* '51. 1c *each for copies from* '45-'51; 2c *each for earlier copies.* . . . Send pre '48 aSF & SS to me and I will send check for mags & postage by return mail. If you don't like what I pay, send back my check & I'll return books plus your postage. Fred Schwartz, 4180 Rosehill Ave, Cincinnati, Ohio . . . *Alexander Fundukis, 629 W* 135 St, *NYC* 31, *wants "Agent From Bear Creek" (good*

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condition, with d-w preferably) by Robert E. Howard, English book, out of print . . . Baltimore, Maryland, fans are organizing a club. Non-sectarian, non-segregationist and non-political. Interested people drop a card to Allen Newton, 114 E 25th St, Baltimore 18 . . . *John Swafford, 222 N Poplar St, Oxford, Ohio, will sell SS Vol. 2, 3, 4, 5 (missing* No. 1), 6 *thru* 12, 14 *thru* 23, *and No.* 1 & 2 *of Vol.* 24. *Will sell as a whole for* $35 *or by volumes at* $3-*volume for pre* '41 *and* $1.50-*volume for the rest. Buy the whole group and I'll throw in* 12 *TWS free* . . . Will trade British mags or old FA for aSF (after Dec '50), Fantasy & S-F (3, 5 and after), Avon F R (12 and after), TWS (from June '51), Galaxy (any) and Galaxy Novels (all but No. 3). Ronald Gillings, 115 Wanstead Park Rd, Ilford, Essex, England . . . *The Pittsburgh Science Fiction Association wants fans in that area to drop in at their meetings. For info call Bill Venable at PErrysville* 4-5518 *or write* 610 *Park Place, Pittsburgh* 9 . . . British fan club, "Nor'west Science-Fantasy Club" would like to hear from US fans interested in trading mags, PB's and hard cover books for similar English material. Write Eric Bentcliffe, 47 Alldis St, Woodsmoor, Stockport, Cheshire, England . . . *Robert O'Malley, 2160 Nott St, Schenectady, NY, has out-of-print books by E. R. Burroughs: The Tarzan Twins, The Oakdale Affair and The Rider, The Lad and the Lion, The Mucker, The Moon Maid, The Land That Time Forgot, The Mad King, Pellucidar, The Bandit of Hell's Bend, and others. Send for complete list and prices* . . . Am interested in doing fantasy illos for fan mags. Also have the following books for sale: Seabrook's "Witchcraft" 50c; Williamson's "Humanoids", Owen's "Porcelain Magician", Clement's "Needle" and Stewart's "Seetee Shock" for $1; Pratt & de Camp's "Land of Unreason", $1.50; Derleth anthologies "The Night Side", "Who Knocks", "Other Side of the Moon", "The Sleeping And The Dead", F. B. Long's "Hounds of Tindalos" and Burnett anthology "Two Bottles of Relish" at $2 each; postage extra on all books. Also have "The Fox Woman" and "The Black Wheel" by Merritt (finished & illustrated by Bok) for $5.00 each. Will accept a copy of Burrough's "Moon Maid" for any of these books except the Merritt ones . . . R. M. Kidd, 926 George, Chicago 14 . . . *Will trade Cosmic Engineers or Stars Like Dust (mint, d-w) for John Carstairs (mint, d-w). Also will trade Men Against the Stars (mint, d-w) for Black Flame or Dark Other (no d-w). Also Imagination* 1, 2, 4, 5 & 6 *for Mar & June* '50 *aSF (both mint). M. McNeil, 2010 McClendon, Houston, Texas* . . . The Little Monsters of American are forming a chapter in NYC and are looking for members. Local fans interested can get info from L. William Mohs, 937 Fulton St, Brooklyn 16, NY.

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. . . *Collector's items for sale: Wonder Stories,* 1st 12 *issues, mint; Vol* 2 *thru* 7, *professionally sewn and bound; all* 14 *Quarterlies, mint; all* 11 *Air Wonders, mint. aSF, Jan* '30 *thru Mar* '33 *excellent to mint except June* '30 *has soiled cover. AS Apr* '26 *thru Mar* '33, *condition good to very good;* 1st 6 *quarterlies, mint; only AS Annual, mint; scattered issues* '33 *to* '50. *SS* 1st 13 *issues,* 1st 3 *bound, others mint. FA* 1st 9 *issues, condition good to very good; Unknown,* 1st 17 *issues; assorted mags of dates given above. Will sell above items in groups by years. Have too many stf books to list, send stamped envelope for complete list. J. Frank Autry,* 209 *East Harris, San Angelo, Texas* . . . Virginia Schick, Box 415, Quakertown, Pa., will sell the following PB's for 30c each or 4-$1: The Metal Monster, Ship of Ishtar, Seven Footprints to Satan, An Earthman on Venus, Donovan's Brain, Man Who Sold The Moon, Beyond the Moon, First Men In the Moon, Behind the Flying Saucers, Flying Saucers Are Real, Science-Fiction Galaxy, PB of Science-Fiction, The Dying Earth, Martian Chronicles, Out of the Silent Planet, Green Girl, Princess of the Atom, Big Eye, Invasion From Mars, Into Plutonian Depths, What Mad Universe, In the Grip of Terror, Terror of the Leopard Men; these paper cover books for 25c each: Sojarr of Titan, The Torch, Operation Interstellar, The Alien; 30 different mags of '50 & '51 for 15c each; hard cover books: Something About Cats, $2; Moonfoam and Sorceries, $2; Humanoids, $1; Uninvited, 50c; Tales of Space & Time, $1; Purple Cloud, $1; Belshazzar, $1; Virgin of the Sun, $1; Ayesha, $1.50; She, $1; Allan Quartermain, $1; The Shadow Girl $1; Sun Queen, $1; A Journey to Other Worlds, $3; Cruise of the Luna 1, 50c; Fugitive Anne, $3; The Lost Cavern, $1. Will sell entire collection for $25. . . . *Any stf fans in the Dorchester and Brookline, Mass., areas between* 15 & 18 *who are interested in joining a new fan club drop a card to Robert Swartz* 106 *Floyd St, Dorchester* 24, *Mass. or phone him at* AV 2-3595 . . Eldon K. Everett, P O Box 513, Tacoma, Wash., wants these fanzines: Science Fiction Fan, Time Traveler and any issues of Fantasy Magazine containing COSMOS; he also wants pre '40 issues of The Shadow, any The Whisperer, Crimebusters mags featuring Whisperer & Norgil stories back issues of The Spider, The Ghost, Wonder Tales, Strange Tales War Birds, Doctor Death, Flash Gordon Mag, Thrills Inc.; books Bride of Frankenstein, Tarzan & The Tarzan Twins With Jad-Bal-Ja The Golden Lion, Whitman Big-Big Book No. 4056 copyright '36. Also wants The Mucker, The Man Without A Soul, Bandit of Hell's Bend Apache Devil, War Chief, all by E. R. Burroughs; also, The Mar of Bronze, and The Shadow Strikes . . . *Walter J. Norcott,* 41 *St. John's*

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Worcester, England, has for sale the following books and mags; please send US currency. WT: Feb, Mar, Apr, May, June, Sept, Oct, Nov '26, $3 each; Feb thru Dec '27, $2.50 each; Jan thru Dec '28, $2.50 each; Jan thru Dec, Sept missing, '29, $2 each; Jan thru Dec '30, $2 each except May (no cover) $1; '31, all nine issues, $1.75 each; '32, Jan thru Dec, $1.75 each; '33, Jan thru Dec, $1.50 except Nov, no cover, $1; '34, Jan thru Dec, $1.50 each except Jan, no cover, $1; will sell entire group for $180.00. Many British and US hard cover books in good or mint condition including such rarities as THE OUTSIDER & OTHERS and BEYOND THE WALL OF SLEEP by Lovecraft. Write for complete list and prices.

THE END

NEWS OF THE MONTH

Latest reports on what our readers are doing. Fan clubs, social events and personalities in the limelight.

The Nolacon has come and gone, and science-fiction fandom is settling down to memories of the past convention and plans for attending the next one. As usual, when you try to crowd talking over the past year with old friends, meeting new ones, and attending the scheduled convention sessions into three short days, events lose their proper sequence and wind up one huge bundle of "all of these people were there and all of this happened". So here, very briefly and with no particular attempt to keep things in chronological order, are a few of the highlights of the Nolacon.

In general, the weather was miserably hot and humid. The convention hotel was air-conditioned, but the contrast between the stifling weather and the cool hotel, plus changes of food, water, etc. had several of the conventioneers (including myself) looking rather pale and wan. However, it takes more than bad weather and poor health to dampen the enthusiasm of science-fiction fans, so the convention marched on.

The total registration was somewhere between 180 and 190 fans and professionals, from all parts of the country. While most of the fans present were from the Southern States, there were groups from San Francisco, Detroit, Cleveland and Chicago as well as individual fans from practically every state in the Union, plus Canada and Mexico.

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The fan who created the most excitement was Lee Hoffman, publisher of Quandry, who turned out to be Miss Lee Hoffman much to the surprise of everyone — especially those fans who had been corresponding with "him" and reading "his" fanmag for the past year. Among the pros present were Judy Merril, Dave Kyle, Martin Greenberg, Lloyd Eshbach, Erle Korshak, Ted Dikty, Fred Brown, Bob Tucker, Fritz Leiber (guest of honor), E. E. Evans, Hans Santesson and Robert Bloch.

Movies, some good and some not so good, formed a major part of the convention. Attendees were treated to previews of both THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL and WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE, the former being one of the best (if not the best) science-fiction movies to date and the latter an entertaining science-adventure film with some beautiful color scenes, particularly those of Earth colliding with the new star.

When the time arrived to decide on the next convention city, a total of six bids were made: San Francisco, New York City, Detroit, Atlanta, Chicago and Niagara Falls. After quite a bit of campaigning and speech-making by the various delegates the first ballot showed Chicago with 30 votes, Atlanta—22, San Francisco—16, Detroit—16, Niagara Falls—11, and New York City—3. The last four cities were dropped, and on the second ballot the vote was Chicago—59, Atlanta—36, and apparently three people didn't care for either site and cast no vote.

The closing evening of the convention was devoted to the annual banquet, with Judy Merril presiding as toastmistress and Robert Bloch as the after-dinner speaker. Following the dinner the crowd adjourned to the convention hall to see a skit by Fritz Leiber and Bob Tucker's photographic slides showing fans and conventions dating back to 1939. At the close of this session some fans remained to see another movie, while others either started on their homeward trip or turned in early to prepare to leave the next day.

Which brings us around to the *next* convention—The 10th Anniversary World Science-Fiction Convention—which will be held in Chicago. Yes, even though it's almost a year away, you can start thinking about it now. Send in your membership dollar so that you'll receive all the news bulletins telling you just who's going to attend and how the plans are coming along. This convention features, for the first time in the history of fandom, a chair*woman*. She's Judy May, Chicago fan who made the bid in New Orleans. Don't wait, join the convention at the beginning so that you don't miss out on *any* of the fun. Send your inquiries and membership dollar to:

Science-Fiction Convention

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Post Office Box 1422
Chicago 90, Illinois

We wonder if you readers could help us locate three of the winners of the Test Piece Contest who seem to have completely disappeared. Donald Dryfoos has a twelve issue subscription to OTHER WORLDS waiting for him if he'll just let us know where he is. The last address we have for him is 151 E. 80th St., New York City. And we have original illustrations for the following people if they will send us their correct addresses: Louis K. O'Leary, 1582 48th Ave., San Francisco 22, California; Joseph B. Lambkin, 206 2nd, Bremerton, Washington.

The second Fantasy Veterans Association convention will be held in New York City April 20, 1952. The address is Werdermann's Hall, 3rd Avenue and East 16th Street, New York, N. Y. All fans are invited, and the tentative program includes speeches, an auction and a fantasy film. For additional information write Ray Van Houten, 127 Spring Street, Paterson 3, N.J.

The Philadelphia Science Fiction Society is holding its 12th science-fiction conference November 11th, at the Knights of Columbus Hall. It'll be past history by the time this issue of OW comes out, of course, but we want to wish you the best of luck just the same.

THE END

Science Fiction Book Reviews

Jack Williamson produced some of the smoothest space-opera ever operated in his three stories of the Legion of Space. It is less pell-mell opera than Dr. E. E. Smith's "Skylark" and "Lensman" yarns, less gaudy than world-saver Edmond Hamilton's tales of weird races and reeling suns, but it has a quality all its own. The first of the two books in which these adventures are chronicled, THE LEGION OF SPACE (Fantasy Press, 1947), if you can find a copy, is already a collectors' item. Now, with THE COMETEERS (Fantasy Press. 1950. 310 p. Ill. $3.00), an even better book, the chronicles are concluded.

LEGION OF SPACE introduced those musketeers of high space — wine-bibbing old Giles Habibula, suave, thoughtful Jay Kalam, and brawny Hal Samdu. It introduced the young John Star and the mystery girl, Aladoree Anthar, guardian of the System's most potent weapon of offense or defense, AKKA. Tricked into betraying his trust, John Star and the three of the Legion drive out into space to rescue Aladoree.

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and AKKA from the monstrous Medusae on their corsair world.

THE COMETEERS takes up the story a generation later with Bob Star, son of John and Aladoree, marked as her successor as guardian of AKKA. Jay Kalam is now Commander of the Legion of Space. Hal Samdu and old Giles Habibula have dropped back into subsidiary places as Star retainers. And here is a new mystery—the identity of the Legion's prisoner, the man called Merrin—and a new threat by unseen viciously threatening invaders from outer space who travel within the glowing green shield of their twelve-million-mile long "comet." Bob Star is tricked as his father was twenty years before; his charge, the mystery-man Merrin, escapes to the comet and with the incomparable three, Samdu, Kalam, and Habibula, young Bob follows. Helped by the girl from within the comet, Kay Nimidee, and by certain of old Giles' best-forgotten skills, they fight their way into the heart of the Cometeers' stronghold, solve Merrin's fantastic secret, and rescue Bob's parents and AKKA.

The title story is followed by "One Against the Legion," in which Giles Habibula is even more than before the center of interest. Captain Chan Derron, framed by a clever criminal, the Basilisk, becomes a fugitive from the Legion, from the Basilisk, and from the female android Luroa, sister of Stephen Orco, the "Merrin" of the previous tale. Wheels spin within wheels until, using the device Derron is accused of having stolen, the Basilisk snatches Aladoree, the Stars, and many others to a bleak world beyond space and time. Giles Habibula's past comes to the rescue again in the nick of time as he fumbles and wheezes his and Derron's way to victory.

Jack Williamson evidently developed an overpowering affection for Giles Habibula, and let the old man take things over. He grows as a character as the stories progress, while Kalam, Samdu, and even the Stars flatten into cardboard types. Small wonder that most fans remember these as the Habibula stories. His shady past is continually rising to threaten his respectable old age. His open cowardice is continually being given the lie by protesting heroism. If you read and like THE LEGION OF SPACE, then you will find THE COMETEERS head and shoulders above it. And if you've never read a Williamson space opera, it's time you did. As a clincher, Edd Cartier has done his best jacket, equally fine end-papers, and a frontispiece for the book. I have one complaint: No Cartier portrait of Habibula! How could he have failed us?

P. SCHUYLER MILLER

A good many critics consider that DWELLERS IN THE MIRAGE (Grandon Co., Providence, R.I. 1950. 295 p. $3.00) was A. Merritt's finest fantasy. They find the earlier books

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—THE MOON POOL, THE FACE IN THE ABYSS, even THE SHIP OF ISHTAR—over-loaded with colorful phraseology to the point of suffocation. Certainly with BURN, WITCH, BURN Merritt began to write in a new vein, drawing his fantasy out of the familiar instead of from a dreamworld all his own, relying less on exotic imagery and bizarre characters. His unfinished novels, completed by Hannes Bok as his notes directed, suffer because he was trying to apply the style of his later books to themes which demanded treatment in his early mood.

DWELLERS IN THE MIRAGE is the story of Leif Langdon, tawny-haired throwback, who with his Cherokee friend Jim Two Eagles, Tsantawu, ventures into an Alaskan valley which is hidden beneath a perpetual mirage. Here he finds a wonder-world of pure Merritt fantasy —the pigmy Little People, out of Indian legendry—the Wolf-Woman, Lur the Sorceress—the girl Evalie — the kraken-god, Khalk'ru, who reaches out of the cold heart of solid stone to take his sacrifice. Old Norse myth, Indian tradition, and pure Merrittesque magic are woven together inimitably as Leif—Dwayanu —is torn between the drive to assume the personality of a warrior of centuries before and his friendship with the Little People of Evalie in their struggle against Lur's cruel folk. If the fantasy is not spun to quite so great heights as in Merritt's earlier books, the characters emerge in far greater reality than in any other of his tales. It is one of the great Merrittales, whether you rate it the greatest or not—pure magic of a kind which has not been equaled by any other writer.

P. SCHUYLER MILLER

After five detective novels, Bob Tucker turns to science fiction with his sixth book *The City in the Sea* (Rhinehart, $2.50). The scene is the North American continent some hundreds of years in the future—the time is not pinned down, and the area is a wilderness following the fall of civilization. Due to the melting of polar ice caps, both ocean-coasts are inundated and a new ocean has been created in the Mississippi Valley.

Man-hating amazonian warriors, voyaging out from what used to be the British Isles, have established a colony on the eastern seaboard and are busily exploiting the natives when one of their patrols captures a man from the other side of the mountains, the unknown interior of the continent. Forcing him into service as a guide, the warriors push across the mountains and far into the interior before discovering they are being led, not guided. The city mentioned in the title is not New York under water, but a mirage-city existing in the new inland sea. Tucker has fun with the story's sex element—two women fighting for the lone man.

—FRANK ROBINSON

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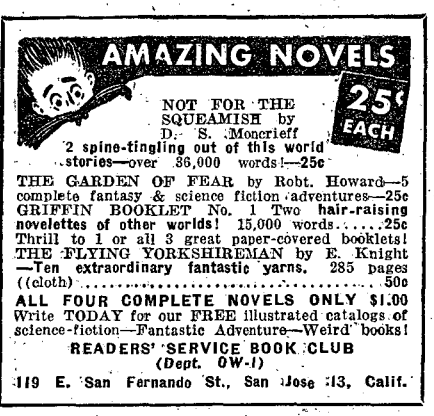
Many old favorites are being reprinted today to cash in on the science fiction boom, not always with happy results as yesterday's favorites have a habit of turning out badly today. Two omnibus volumes just released, however, remain good reading. The first, *Seven Science Fiction Novels of H. G Wells* (Dover Publications, New York, $3.95), needs no introduction to any fan who has been reading the genre for more than two weeks. Packaged in one giant volume are the best-known works of the pioneer science writer: "The First Men in the Moon," "The Island of Dr. Moreau," "The War of Worlds," "The Invisible Man," "The Time Machine," "The Food of the Gods," and "In the Days of the Comet." Wells' writings are chock-full of ideas and machines which have gradually come into existence in the last decade or so and are still coming. Some years ago another magazine made much of the fact that one of its writers practically told how to make an atom bomb. True, but Wells "invented" the bomb thirty years earlier.

The second omnibus is *When Worlds Collide* and *After Worlds Collide* by Philip Wylie and Edwin Balmer (Lippincott Company, Philadelphia, $2.95). Although newer readers may not be familiar with these two books, they're missing two outstanding examples of writing and plotting if they pass them by now. The first novel deals with the nations of earth when it is discovered an invading planet is riding a collision course, that life on earth can be numbered by only months. There is no trick ending, no sudden discovery that someone made a calculating mistake or is pulling a hoax. A small handful escape in a rocket just before the smash-up.

The second novel is a sequel and carries on from there, following the space voyagers to a new planet and the rebuilding of a new civilization. The first story of this duo is now being filmed at Paramount Studios by the man who made last year's *DESTINATION MOON*.

BOB TUCKER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See News of the Month, page 144

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Harold Hostetler

In your editorial in the September OTHER WORLDS you really hit some of the high points of stf, and, as a great many fans might think, several of the low ones.

Among many of my high school friends I am known as a "brain". Does that mean I am above reading *Amazing Stories?* It does not. While *Amazing* is primarily aimed at beginning readers of science-fiction, it runs quite a few stories that are good by anyone's standards. Now you think that *I* don't know what good stf is. Just because I am one of the fans who likes *Amazing* doesn't mean I don't like *Astounding*. I do. *Astounding* is more technical with its stories and its editorials; I am proud to say that I understand most of what JWC and his writers try to put across to the stf public. I like *both* technical and non-technical stf.

Now we come to your magazine. You are somewhere in between these two extremes—and in a better position than either of the two previously mentioned magazines. You strike a happy medium in the field of science-fiction. Your stories are neither the type that little Johnny in the sixth grade would say, "Aw, kid stuff," nor what some minor physicist would call highbrow stuff. Your magazine is neither for el mentary school students nor f the brainy upper class of scientist It's for the ones who want to l entertained. We fans don't, in m opinion, want to be taught how build a cyclotron, and we don want to read Flash Gordon or Buc Rogers for a living either. We wai good stories about subjects that wi interest us in our spare time whe we come home from school or worl Sure, science-fiction can teach u something, but this can be in social way, not a technical on When we read stf, we escape fro our little *ordinary* world into or where anything plausible goes. An so goes my opinion.

Why everyone wants to pick o Shaver, I'll never know. He wrot some stories which got everybod with a mild interest in stf excitec Doesn't that prove something? writer who can stir so many peopl *must* be good. What about the me of the past like Roger Bacon an Leonardo de Vinci? What are they tc day? Maybe what Shaver will b three or four hundred years fron now. Let the man write, I say. Bu his stories and print them. Continu to print every good story he can turn out. I believe that there are a gooc many fans who will change thei minds about him.

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A few comments about your magazine before I shut up. The cover on the September issue was superb, magnificent! A dozen more like that and your competitors will think an express train (atomic, of course) went by. Your policy of no-policy supports this, too. I haven't read Gibson's novel yet, but the rest of the stories were wonderful. The illos by Cartier were all excellent, too. Don't change your magazine at all if you suddenly decide to follow your competitors. If you continue to be different, change all you want to. But keep the policy-of-no-policy and the one you set in your editorial.

One final word. You were just asking for trouble in your editorial, but here's one friend for you.

Box 163,
Cairnbrook, Pa.

That's saying it, Harold! Your sentiments are expressed better than we could have expressed ours in as few words!

Nobody's picking on Shaver—it's just that he managed to be ultra-controversial; and in a controversy, people take sides. The argument has made history. As for three hundred years from now, it is a fact that of all the writers of today in stf, only one has the remotest chance of being remembered three centuries from now. That one is Shaver. As for letting him write, we never stopped. We'll present every good story the man can write. Only we don't own the Shaver Mystery, and it's no mystery anymore, anyway. Both factions have "solved" it to their satisfaction. Thousands believe it true, thousands do not. Nothing, it seems, can change their opinion. Unless a dero were to land a flying saucer at La Guardia field. And in that case, we don't want to be present! Only no dero would do such a foolish thing . . .

As for our covers, we are paying special attention to them. Last issue, and next issue, no doubt you liked and will like. This issue your editor likes, because he likes beautiful women. He's always liked them. His friends are so cognizant of the fact that they give him nude statuary for Christmas presents, and send him nudist magazines in the mail.

P.S.—Any of you OW readers got any nude photos you aren't using? —Rap

Lee Fisher

Boy! Oh boy! Did I like the first part of that serial "I Flew In A Flying Saucer". That was really hep, man! Oh man! I can hardly wait till the next issue of OW comes out at the newsstands. I like the way the author leads you right up to the point of contact with them, and then lets you down by stopping right there. Oh brother, that made me mad. The next issue of OW I'll be sure to get.

This is my first issue of OW, but believe me, there will be more. I am very much interested in science fiction because I believe man will reach

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the planets and the stars, some day, and maybe you're giving someone an idea on the drive, shape, etc, etc, that will make some of these dreams into a reality.

I would rate your stories in issue No. 14 in this way:

1—I Flew In A Flying Saucer . . . . Excellent.
2—Lightning Over Saturn . . . Good.
3—A Matter of Perspective . . . . Good.
4—Music From Down Under . . . . Fair.
5—Journey To Nowhere . . . . Fair.
6—The End of Science Fiction . . . . No Good.
7—No Approach . . . . No Good.

The cover by H. W. McCauley is very good, but for the life of me I can't figure out what they are doing, even for fifty smackers.

I hate to repeat what Zoltan Karassy said, but you must admit that the glue on your magazine is a little brittle or something because I barely finished reading it when it fell apart. I think you should have longer stories, for you just get really interested in a story when it ends.

I would like to know if there is a science fiction club in or around Alhambra, California. If there is, please let me know.

500 S. Granada,
Alhambra, Calif.

One of the reasons you got a serialization of "I Flew In A Flying Saucer" and had to wait for the next installment is your request for longer stories. We have found that the question of whether or not we carry serials is immaterial — our readers want the BEST science fiction we can obtain. Many times we've turned down the best because it wouldn't fit in the book—but no more! No matter what the length, if it is top science fiction—you get it!

Yes, we know the glue binding isn't as perfect as we want it to be. We're working on it hard. OW is printed by a firm which never before printed a magazine like OW. They are a big firm, but formerly specialized in children's coloring books and in high-school annuals. So, they have been forced to learn from the ground up, and train an entire force of technical men on machines strange to them. These machines are monstrous—if you've ever seen a binder, it would scare the pants off you. Anyway, they are learning, and sooner or later, the binding will equal the best available. Until then, we are standing back of the printer to give him the chance to perfect his technique. We know our readers will stand back of us! They've done so ever since we started the magazine to satisfy our desire to put out the kind of a book we really wanted to put out. Ray Palmer is a stf reader just like you OW readers, and the first fan to achieve the ambition of putting out his own magazines. Frankly, it's you reader friends, standing behind, who made it possible, and we'll never forget it!

As for a stf club, we're sure you'll get news from such a club in your

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vicinity just as soon as they read this letter.—Rap

R. W. Lundberg

I just read my first—and last—issue of your magazine OTHER WORLDS. The reason I write you is to ask how a magazine having such good stories and articles (I refer to the September 1951 issue) can have such a lousy editorial and the ridiculous bit of toilet tissue by Blochhead, whoops. It is seldom that a man's name fits like Robert Bloch does. It is obvious that he knows nothing of dianetics, probably being congenitally illiterate. Did he ever graduate from kindergarten?

The personal column is disappointing. Note that all the infants want ASF prior to the lucky day when it took off its diapers and put on long pants—ie. the day it became a SF. Why you editors refuse to face the responsibility of an editor by educating your readers, is more than I will ever know. And to have the guts to brag that you edit a comic book for the species of hairless ape that calls itself "homo sapiens"! You now join *Galaxy* and *Amazing* as having the lousiest editors in the business.

219 Clayton Ave.,
San Jose 10, Calif.

Since you don't intend to give us a chance to answer your letter, we will address our reply to those readers who ARE going to read the next issue. First we'll answer your initial question: the reason for the sharp contrast between our editorials (lousy) and our stories (such good) is probably personal. We just aren't as good a writer as our professional and amateur contributors. Besides, we have some rather radical ideas when we write editorials, and they get under some types of skins (yours, apparently).

Mr. Bloch is not a blockhead. He is one of the most educated, brainiest and most capable writers we know—and we know him personally for more than twenty years! It is true, as you say, that "a man's fits like Robert Bloch." That guy is a MAN. Bob knows as much about dianetics as the average man who has followed L. Ron Hubbard's experiment into fictional psychiatry. No, he is not congenitally illiterate (whatever that means—as it isn't a scientific nomenclature in any sense of the words). No, he did not graduate from kindergarten. Graduation comes with termination of Eighth grade, Senior year in High School, and at the termination of College or University courses. You merely "pass" from kindergarten to first grade.

Our personals column will defend itself. Just pray that the "local infants" do not call on you to stuff your words down your throat. The day ASF became aSF was a lucky day only to fans of aSF like yourself. You are welcome to like any magazine you please—so it would be well to give the "infants" the same liberty!

So stf editors have a "responsibil-

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ity" to "educate their readers"? All we can say, is that the amount of editing we had to do to your letter, correcting spelling, grammar, etc, to make you look slightly less ridiculous than you are, seems to prove that aSF's editor has failed signally in your case to get you out of your kindergarten!

And when did we brag of editing a comic book? We have never edited a comic book. Or are you inferring that OTHER WORLDS is a comic book, you louse, you?

We are especially intrigued by your reference to "hairless ape that calls itself homo sapiens" with the obvious inference that you do not belong to the species. Pardon our curiosity, but just which brand of hairless ape do you call yourself? Maybe we have discovered the missing link at last!

We are not insulting you, please take note, but merely returning your ungentlemanly remarks to you—having no use for them. Our readers are all homo sapiens, and all gentlemen and gentlewomen.

And we're fully prepared for the devastating news that NOW you never WILL buy another copy of OTHER WORLDS. We don't think you are "educated" enough to have the courage to do so. We suggest, however, that you read aSF faithfully, because it also is a GENTLEMAN'S magazine, and maybe it'll teach YOU how to be one.—Rap

Philip Brantingham

That outburst of yours in the editor's column was a clumsy attempt to "hit back" at LIFE. After all, Ray, isn't the glorified fairy tale of Shaver's aimed at the slightly below adolescent mind? Certainly no adult human being would seriously consider a fiction story as fact?

1517 Lincoln Ave.,
Calumet City, Ill.

We're sorry our outburst seemed an effort to hit back. Actually we did not intend it to be. We like, and read, LIFE. We just happen to disagree on the Shaver subject. Their knowledge of the subject was far from complete.

No, the Shaver fairy tale wasn't an effort to aim at the below adolescent mind. It contains a great deal of the world's best mythology, and this is the sort of thing some of our best literary minds have used for centuries. Shaver was not being original, nor lowbrow, in using it.

As for your last statement, CERTAINLY they would, because CERTAINLY they did. That is the astounding fact—50,000 readers did believe it, and still do. Those 50,000 represent a readership that AMAZING STORIES no longer has, because they no longer find the writer they BELIEVE in its pages. Personally we are amazed as you should be—but we do recognize and admit the FACT. Besides, nobody has defined what is TRUE in the Shaver Mystery and what is not. We are not going to attempt to. That is a job for a brain possessing more data and more mindpower

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than ours. Give Shaver credit for one thing, he rocked the complacency of the stf field to its foundation.—Rap

Peter Christoph

I just bought my second issue of your magazine and it was so good I just had to write. I thought "I Flew In A Flying Saucer" was wonderful. It is one of the best stf stories I have read in a long time. Who is A. V. G.? Arthur V. Godfrey? The article by Willy Ley is just as good. I hope you print more of his articles in the near future.

12 Hillview Terrace,
Castleton on Hudson, N.Y.

No, A. V. G. isn't Arthur Godfrey. He is a military man who has passed on much information to us about flying saucers. For obvious reasons, he must remain anonymous. And A. V. G. are not his real initials.—Rap.

Eldon K. Everett

Kin King, Mount. Sanatorium, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, is a stfan but is bogged down with TB, and can't afford to buy any mags. So if you have any old stf mags lying around, with or without covers, bundle 'em up and send 'em to him!

Vernell Coriell, Box 652, Pekin, Ill., who publishes and distributes "The Burroughs Bulletin" free of charge, is putting out for his next issue the Giant Memorial issue with umpteen hundred pages, listing *all* of ERB'S works, etc. Why not help him afford it by sending him a few cents? You'll want the memorial issue anyway, if you're an ERB fan—so don't rub his philanthropy into the ground!

P. O. Box 513,
Tacoma, Wash.

OTHER WORLDS' editors endorse these requests. Anything you send to Coriell to help him get that Memorial out to you is worth it.—Rap

Harlan Ellison

You've got a potential there, and what are you doing with it? Just take a look at the fourteen issues of OW that have seen the light of day and tell me what the REALLY excellent stories were:

Punishment Without Crime—Bradbury.
The Fatal Technicality—Phillips.
Dear Devil—Russell.
Portrait Of Narcissus—Jones.
Enchanted Village—van Vogt.
Wisher Takes All—Temple.
Forget-Me-Not—Temple.
The Swordsmen of Varnis—Jackson.
The Frownzly Florgels—Brown.
Holes In My Head—Phillips.
Living Lies—Beynon.
Johnny Goodturn—Tanner.
The Plot Machine—Keller.
Test Piece—Russell.
Beyond The Darkness—Byrne.
The Witness—Russell.
A Word From Our Sponsor—Brown.
Music From Down Under—Kennedy.
I Flew In A Flying Saucer—A.V.G.
Journey To Nowhere—Shaver.
No Approach—Gordon.

There you are; only twenty-one stories out of fourteen issues that

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contained anywhere from five to eleven or so stories. Now is that using the potential that you've got? I ask you? Seriously, I'd like a good, down-to-Earth answer. None of this "we're trying" routine. Cold, hard facts. Show us what is coming up.

Can you match *Galaxy's* contents page, bearing in mind that the real proof of the merit of a story is in its anthologization qualities. And look at how many of OW's yarns have been anthologized in comparison with the ones *Galaxy* has between hard covers.

Or can you stand up to aSF for instance with "Iceworld" by Hal Clement? or the Mag of F and SF with its Pratt and deCamp "Gavagan's Bar" series. Or even MADGE with its sequel to the "Usurpers"? Or SS with "Star Watchers" or "Gamblers" by Reynolds and Brown?

12701 Shaker Blvd.,
Apartment 616,
Cleveland 20, Ohio.

Out of 103, to be exact! No, Harlan, we haven't realized our potential! But we are going to better that, 20 per cent, even in your estimation! Our potential is 100 per cent. Only nobody ever got that percentage—he'd be in Heaven if he had! But if we can reach 50 per cent, we'll be on top of the heap. It is true that what one reader likes, another doesn't. 50 per cent would be "perfect" in that analysis.

Anthology stuff? Now, would you like us to tell you how anthologies are REALLY selected? But we won't, as we don't want you to be disillusioned. But take one significant fact—Street and Smith does not PERMIT anthologies. They say they buy reprint rights, and they won't release them. Then where does that put Astounding according to your measuring stick? It would be unfair, to say the least. And as for how many yarns are selected for anthologies FIRST, and then printed in magazines by ARRANGEMENT, you'd be surprised. Nuts, brother!

Can we beat the stuff you mentioned? Sure can. Just watch the next six issues of OW. Every issue will top those yarns, or at least equal them. We've got some stuff that will knock your ears off. GOT, not going to get—how's that for hard facts?—Rap.

Joel Nydahl

Can I buy back issues of OW *one at a time* instead of having to take them as part of a subscription?

Is there any way I can subscribe to your sister magazine, FATE?

304 W. Washington St.,
Marquette, Mich.

Yes, you can buy single copies of OW for 35c by writing to the office at 1144 Ashland Ave., Evanston, Ill. You can also subscribe to FATE at the same address, $3.00 for 12 issues, $6.00 for 24.—Rap.

Alex Saunders

I receive the Oct. '51 issue of OTHER WORLDS. Great! This is what I have been waiting for, and not with too much patience. I skip

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the contents page, pass two stories that look good and come across the third that stops me cold. "I Flew In A Flying Saucer", by Capt. A. V. G. What a pleasant surprise to discover a fact-fiction saucer yarn without a word of warning from previous issues.

With this find, how can I continue my fervent examination of the rest of the mag? It just can't be done. I lack the will power. So I start right in reading, hands trembling, eyes near popping. Interest never lags. Brother, talk about absorption!

Reading steadily, I eventually reach page 83. The first column finished, I come to the second. At the bottom are some words in brackets which I catch only subconsciously. Doubtless a "concluded on page such and such".

So I go on reading. And then . . . then I come to the bracketed words —and a chilling shock paralyzes my every nerve! Rap, how could you? Of all the stories that could have been serialized, why, oh why pick the one dealing with the intriguing disks? Don't know if I'll ever forgive you for that shameful blunder. Why man, now I'll have to wait six weeks—think, six long, torturous weeks!—for the last installment. The strain, to a saucer enthusiast like me, will be terrific. How will I ever hold out? How?

34 Hillsdale Ave. W.,
Toronto 12, Ont., Can.

We predict you'll hold! And that you find it worthwhile.—Rap

George Riley

Now you've done it! Down to second place for OTHER WORLDS.

Serials yet! *æœ&, etc. "We *know* you'll like the idea." Well, Palmer, you sure don't *know* that *I* like the idea. I think the idea smells.

Dogmatic statement: Only second rate authors require hundreds of thousands of words to develop a theme. Sure, good authors may take that much space, but only because they either need the per-word income or because they're trying to carry too much idea under one title.

Serials. Who needs 'em?

And so, you go down to second place. Or even third if you persist in this thoughtless abnegation of a superb editorial policy.

What was wrong with the Colossus I-II-III series? And Bradbury sneaked a whole novel into print chapter by chapter with his Chronicles. If you must publish serial-length stories, make an extra issue of it; your—at present—victorious competitor for first place does just that.

445 Wellington,
Chicago, Ill.

Nothing wrong with Colossus I-II-III. We "sneaked in a serial" by using that trilogy gag. It WAS a serial. But we think you'll find our LONG serials of the future equally acceptable. For instance, the sequel (60,000 words) to PROMETHEUS II and COLOSSUS I-II-III, S. J. Byrne's "GOLDEN GUARDSMEN" It will appear as I and II. And we

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have the first part on our desk right now—just came this last hour via airmail. And we say it's terrific. You'll say the same. And you'll find the way we present it to your liking.

GALAXY NOVELS just don't sell. So THEY are going back to serials. Now who's in second place? Your editor knows from experience that extra issues like this don't sell —GALAXY had to find it out the hard way.—Rap

Robert F. Carlston

I have been a reader, yes, even a voracious reader of science fiction for the past ten years. I am a salesman and I spend each and every night in a hotel curled up on the bed with whatever magazine of this type happens to be on the newsstand. I buy every magazine of this type on the market. I read them from cover to cover starting with page one and ending with 132 or 164 or whatever it may happen to be. Good stories, bad stories, editorials, letters to the editor, articles, and anything else that may happen to be between the covers. I will in all probability continue this policy no matter what may occur.

Through these years I have withstood the numerous debates about trimmed edges, sexy covers, dianetics, ad. nauseum, without being tempted to enter the fray with my trusty typewriter. I could enjoy without taking an active part in the current dispute. In other words, I am one of your "average" readers.

At long last, however, I am forced to put in my two-bits worth. I refer to your decision to run serials. If it were just OTHER WORLDS that was involved, I would just pass up the magazine and concentrate on the other 25 or 30 in the field. Alas and alack, the disease seems to be contagious! No less than three of your competitors announced the policy at the same time you did.

Now I like long stories better than short ones, always provided the quality is there. I understand perfectly that it is impossible to present full length novels and a handful of short stories in the same issue. But didn't GALAXY solve that to everyone's satisfaction by publishing the good, long stories under separate cover, so to speak? I guess it didn't work out that way, though, because they are jumping on the serial bandwagon too.

Route No. 2,
Redwood Falls, Minn.

You are far from an "average" reader! You read ALL the magazines from cover to cover! That's exceptional. Maybe so many magazines decide to use serials because "Mr. Average" wants them? We don't know—but we do know we're tired of publishing stories not up to snuff because the number of pages in our magazine isn't sufficient to allow us the rein we had at Ziff-Davis with 320 pages and the boss talking about making it 448! We could run two book-length novels complete in one issue, and ten short stories! Now, however, we don't

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know from one day to the next if another paper cut or price increase isn't going to lop off another 32 pages, and leave us with short-shorts. We rebelled, personally, at rejecting fine long stories because our "need" was 3,000 word shorts! Need, our foot! We just aren't going to be dictated to that way. We publish this magazine because we like the stories we publish. And by Godfrey, we're going to publish the ones we like from now on—any way we can. If the need to defend ourselves from "enemies" forces us to spend billions each year, the need to publish good science fiction forces us to run serials. From now on the Kremlin doesn't edit OW, we do! Other magazines are trying to duck the issue, but we won't. One of the best magazines in the fiction field was "Short Stories" because it ran a lot of LONG stories. It was trying to duck the issue with its title, and it was a little white lie. YOU like long stories, WE like 'em. But with the space we've got (you can read OW in one evening!) we seem to be forced to gulp down tantalizingly small bites that we can never really sink our teeth into. Okay, so you don't like to wait. Then SAVE the serial until you have it complete. Or don't buy the magazine until the serial is finished, then send in the money and we'll send you the back issues in one package. But don't say you don't LIKE long stories because the Kremlin forces us to dole them out. And don't say you WANT short stuff for the same reason! We read over 100 short stories to find ONE good one. We read only three or four long stories to find a good one. The answer is obvious—hardest thing to write is a GOOD short story. Why? Because it takes words, lots of them, to develop a theme with any guts to it at all.—Rap.

"Allright, bring on your terror show."

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For the convenience of readers of OTHER WORLDS, we are listing here a number of science fiction and kindred books that can be secured directly from us. If you wish any of the following titles, address your order to OTHER WORLDS Bookshop, 1144 Ashland Avenue, Evanston, Ill. Only prepaid orders accepted. We pay postage.

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Seven strange stories, including *Blindness*, a tale of Prometheus reborn, snatching atomic energy from the sun itself; *Twilight* and *Night*, prophetic visions of the future. $3.00

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Kenneth Arnold - Author of "The Real Flying Saucers"

Kenneth Arnold, who presents his sensational round up of proof of the reality of the Flying Saucers, exclusively for OTHER WORLDS in this issue, was born March 29, 1915, in Sebeka, Minn. He was educated at Minot, North Dakota, and was all-state end in 1932-33. Football under Bernie Bierman was interrupted by a knee injury. In 1938 he was employed by Red Comet, Inc., manufacturers of automatic fire-extinguishing apparatus. In 1940 he established his own fire control supply company. He now lives in Boise, Idaho, and sells his fire equipment over five states via the air—flying his own plane direct to rancher customers, landing in pastures and mountain meadows. He is married and has two children.

On June 24, 1947, he sighted a chain of nine mysterious saucer-shaped objects over the Cascade mountains. His report to the nation began the now famous Flying Saucer Mystery. Almost immediately he found himself involved in a fantastic series of events which culminated in the death of two high secret service men, carrying fragments of a flying saucer which had crashed on Maury Island, off Tacoma, Washington. The fragments were never found in the wreckage, and ever since, officials have tried to deny the flying disks as illusion, hoax or just plain imagination. Most recent effort to deny their existence has been an official story by a Navy research commander, named Liddel. It was claimed the saucers were merely the Skyhook balloons released at Minneapolis.

Arnold has taken kodachrome movies of flying saucers three times, and has seen them on six different occasions. These movies, indisputable evidence of the existence of a mysterious craft, are now in the possession of Ray Palmer, editor of OTHER WORLDS.

All over the world, when Flying Saucers are mentioned, they must be linked with the name of Kenneth Arnold, their discoverer.

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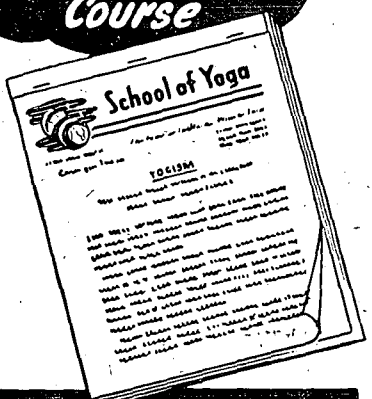

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